

# W OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 2014 NEWSPAPER W

## PRISONERS SUE SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY OVER DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT OF GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PRISONERS

SAN BERNARDINO – Today 15 individuals filed a federal class action lawsuit against San Bernardino County Sheriff John McMahon and the county over discriminatory policies at the West Valley Detention Center that deny gay, bisexual and transgender inmates equal access to work, recreation and rehabilitative programs solely based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The lawsuit was filed by the ACLU Foundation of Southern California (ACLU SoCal) and the law firm of Kaye, McLane, Bednarski & Litt, LLP. It charges the county's policy is unconstitutional and violates the 14th Amendment's guarantee of equal protection to all individuals.

Currently, individuals held in the jail's general population area have access to myriad services, including work and rehabilitative programs that allow inmates to earn time credits and reduce their sentences. Individuals who are gay, bisexual and transgender are housed in the "alternative lifestyle tank," where they are denied access to those same programs. As a result, individuals who are gay, bisexual and transgender are forced to serve longer sentences than other inmates convicted of the exact same offense.

And unlike prisoners in the general population, gay, bisexual and transgender inmates are confined to their cells for up to 23 hours a day.

"While jail officials have an obligation to keep all inmates safe from harm, they cannot achieve that goal by subjecting individuals who are gay, bisexual and transgender to harsher conditions, or by denying them access to services simply because of their sexual orientation or gender identity," said Melissa Goodman, Director of ACLU SoCal's LGBT, Gender & Reproductive Justice Project. "Such policies are unconstitutional and unwise. Inmates who are provided vocational training and treatment services are more likely to find work, stay clean, and ultimately remain out of the criminal justice system. That's good for taxpayers and public safety."

Dan McKibben is among the inmates affected by the county's discriminatory policy. McKibben, who identifies as gay and is a plaintiff in the lawsuit, sought to participate in the work, vocational and educational programs offered to other prisoners. His requests were denied, as were similar appeals to participate in religious services. While at the jail, he was subject to insults and harassment by staff, and was unable to obtain medical treatment for his congestive heart failure and diabetes.

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"For months, we have found case after case of individuals who are gay, bisexual and transgender who are subject to the kind of lock down detention reserved for the most hardened criminals," said David McLane, an attorney with Kaye, McLane, Bednarski & Litt, LLP. "There is no reasonable explanation for this two-tier system of justice that denies some inmates access to the most basic programs in education, work and drug rehabilitation based on little more than their gender identity or sexual orientation. The law does not permit local law enforcement to discriminate or dehumanize an individual simply because they are gay, bisexual and transgender yet that is what officials have been allowed to do at the West Valley Detention Center. It's unlawful and must stop."

The lawsuit seeks to require San Bernardino County and the sheriff's department to provide all inmates equal access and treatment to programs, as required by state and federal law.

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**"Prisons do not disappear social problems, they disappear human beings. Homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness, and illiteracy are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages."**

– Angela Davis

## SEND US YOUR ART!

This month's header is by Trevor! Have your art featured in the Newspaper! We'll feature a different artist each month! Send us a drawing that says, "Black & Pink" or "Black and Pink" or "Poetry from the Heart" for the headers! Header art should be around the size of the newspaper header! Smaller or larger images may be resized to fit. You can send us other art too and we will include it in the poetry page.

What will you design?!  
Mail Submissions to:  
Black & Pink - Newspaper Submissions



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### Statement of Purpose

Black & Pink is an open family of LGBTQ prisoners and "free world" allies who support each other. Our work toward the abolition of the prison industrial complex is rooted in the experience of currently and formerly incarcerated people. We are outraged by the specific violence of the prison industrial complex against LGBTQ people, and respond through advocacy, education, direct service, and organizing.

Black & Pink is proudly a family of people of all races.

### About this Newspaper

Since 2007, Black & Pink free world volunteers have pulled together a monthly newspaper primarily composed of material written by our family's incarcerated members. In response to letters we receive, more prisoners receive the newspaper each issue!

This month, the newspaper is being sent to: **6,620** prisoners!

### Disclaimer:

Please note that the ideas and opinions expressed in the Black & Pink Newspaper are solely those of the authors and artists and do not necessarily reflect the views of Black & Pink. Black & Pink makes no representations as to the accuracy of any statements made in the Newspaper, including but not limited to legal and medical information. Authors and artists bear sole responsibility for their work. Everything published in the Newspaper is also on the internet—it can be seen by anyone with a computer. By sending a letter to "Newspaper Submissions," you are agreeing to have your piece in the Newspaper and on the internet. For this reason, we only publish First Names and State Location to respect people's privacy. Pieces may be edited to fit our anti-oppression values and based on our Editing Guidelines.

### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS TO HOT PINK!

Seeking erotic short stories, poems, AND ART by Black & Pink incarcerated and free-world family members for a new 'zine. To be mailed, art cannot include full nudity. Please send submissions (and shout outs to the authors from the first issue mailed in January!) addressed to Black & Pink - HOT PINK. This is a voluntary project, and no money will be offered for submissions, but you might get the chance to share your spicy story with many others! The zine will be sent 1-2 times per year. To subscribe to receive a copy of HOT PINK twice a year, write to our address, Black & Pink - GENERAL.

## A MESSAGE FROM JASON NOVEMBER AND OCTOBER

Page 2

Dear friends,

I hope this note finds you as well as possible. It's hard to believe it's already November. Also, here is another apology for our slow moving on newspaper things. We are always trying to figure out how to be most effectively on top of that. I appreciate that folks constantly hold us accountable and remind us that you depend on our newspaper for connection. It is our responsibility to get it out to you, thank you for bearing with us as we do our best. This month, we have combined the October and November newspaper issue, instead of skipping a newspaper.

I want to thank everyone who has sent in their survey thus far. We have already received nearly 900 surveys! It is pretty incredible. You will notice that it is printed again this month. Please do not fill out the survey more than once. We are tracking the surveys coming in, so we won't add your name into the raffle or data again, so remember to only send in one survey. Thank you for being so generous with your responses. We are very slowly going through the surveys and look forward to having some kind of real assessment of the information we are getting from you.

I have been looking at some of the responses, just getting a brief look at some of what you have to say. One of the questions asks, "What is your vision of a world without prisons?" I have noticed that many of the responses include something that suggests we must have prisons. Some responses say that there are some terrible people you have met in prison that must be locked up. Others say that we need some way of punishing people. I have also read some that say if we do not lock people up then there will be chaos and people will just kill each other in the street. Reading these responses makes me think we need to print some more things in the paper about what abolition is and why we believe in transformative justice.

Not all of the responses have suggested we need prisons. One of the responses said it would be like a world full of rainbows and unicorns. Others have suggested that it would mean we are actually offering real rehabilitation. Some have suggested that it would mean freedom not only for themselves but for their family and friends. A few have written about the need to create real justice system that looks at healing both for those who have caused harm and those who have been harmed.

One of the long term goals of Black and Pink is to create a world free from prisons. We do not imagine that this is going to happen over night. It will be a process that involves all people. It will be a process that follows the lead of people of color, LGBTQ people, sex workers, prisoners, ex-prisoners, as well as survivors of harm. Traditionally the goals of abolition are broken up into steps. This is called the "attrition model." In this model the work towards abolition includes a moratorium on all prison and jail construction, meaning no more building additional cells on an existing prison/jail and no building new prisons/jails. Another part of the model is "decarceration." Decarceration is the process of getting people out of prison. When we say we want to repeal mandatory minimum sentences and let people out of prison, that is a decarceration effort. When we say we want to end Life Without Parole sentences and let people out, that is a decarceration effort. When we fight to stop life long civil commitments, that is a decarceration effort. The third part of the attrition model is "excarceration." Excarceration is the practice of NOT putting people in prison. Excarceration is similar to decriminalization, making things no longer illegal (like sex work or drugs). Excarceration, however, also includes creating new practices for dealing with harm in truly justice centered ways. When someone does commit violence, when someone does sexually assault or murder someone, what are we going to do? This is when we turn to the ideas of transformative justice and restorative justice that we have printed in previous issues of the paper. This is when we create new and creative ways of getting people to take responsibility for the harm they have caused and also begin creating practices that allow those who have been harmed to be cared for. This is a big cultural change we are fighting for. We are trying to get away from punishment and simply throwing people away. We want to transform our culture into one that values all lives and sees no one

as disposable. The belief that we can create a liberated world without prisons is why I end my note the same way each month because once there were no prisons, that day will come again.

In loving solidarity,  
Jason

Dear friends,

I hope this note finds you as well as possible. I am excited to begin getting surveys from you all. The wisdom you share with us and the information you give will help us strengthen our work. It will also help us tell the truth about what it is like for LGBTQ people in prison. Thank you for your willingness to share with us.

As October begins I am focusing my attention towards the end of the month, October 22nd is National Day of Protest Against Police Brutality, and Repression. This is a day that has been organized every year by grassroots movement activists since 1996. The purpose is to act as a reminder that the police cause great harm to many communities across the country. In particular, it is becoming common knowledge that police or other security officers kill a Black person in the US every 28 hours. According to their mission statement, the "National Day of Protest aims to bring forward a powerful, visible, national protest against police brutality and the criminalization of a generation. It aims to expose the state's repressive program. It aims to bring forward those most directly under the gun of Police Brutality AND to also reach into all parts of the society--bringing forward others to stand in the fight against this official brutality. And the National Day of Protest aims to strengthen the peoples' organized capacity for resistance." Do you remember your first interaction with the police when you were on the street? Do you remember the police who arrested you before you got locked away from the people you care about? Can you imagine what it would look like if there was real justice rather than trigger happy cops on the street?

The reality of police brutality has gotten more attention lately. Since the police shot and killed Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO there has been more open conversation about police violence. Yet, as we wrote in last month's newspaper, Michael Brown is sadly one of many, many names. Did you know that today's police are the descendants of "Slave Patrols"? The original police in the United States existed for the purpose of making sure that anyone who escaped slavery was caught and returned to the white slave owners. Over time these bands of men were given more power and eventually deputized by the government. It is no surprise, then, that police today continue this legacy of racism. These same groups of men that rounded up people who escaped slavery also targeted white indentured servants who similarly fled their masters. The role of these early police was to keep poor white people and enslaved Black people under the thumb of white land owning men. Really, things have not changed all that much.

I think about this history a lot when I see organizations like G.O.A.L (Gay Officers Action League). Kuwasi Balagoon, a political prisoner who died of AIDS related illness in December 1986 wrote, "When a gay group protests lack of police protection, by making an alliance with police to form a gay taskforce, they ain't making a stand against the system they are joining it. Putting more power in the hands of those who attack them for being what they are in the first place." This is why it is so important that Black and Pink continues our work. Not only so that we can support LGBTQ prisoners but so that we can remind LGBTQ communities in the "free world" focused on real liberation. We keep this fight going knowing that once there were no prisons, that day will come again.

## THANK YOU!

THANK YOU! We have already received many survey responses from last month's newspaper. If you have not filled out the survey yet, please do so! We look forward to including your voice in our final report." This is the final newspaper the survey will appear in. Please send by DEC 15th.

## BLACK AND PINK STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

### ANALYSIS

Our goal is liberation. We have a radical view of the fight for justice: We are feminist. We are anti-racist. We want queer liberation. And we are against capitalism. Prisons are part of the system that oppresses and divides us. By building a movement and taking action against this system of violence, we will create the world we dream of.

We also celebrate the beauty of what exists now: Our love for each other. The strength of our planet. Our incredible resiliency. All of the power we have to continue existing. While dreaming and struggling for a better world, we commit to living in the present.

Abolition is our goal, and our strategy for action. Any advocacy, services, organizing, and direct action we take will remove bricks from the system, not put up more walls. We want revolution. And we will work on reforms too, even if they are only small steps at ending the suffering caused by prisons.

Our work is based in the experience of people who are or were in prison. We also raise up the voices of formerly incarcerated people as our “free world” members of the Leadership Circle. We know that those most hurt by the violence of the prison industrial complex have the knowledge of how to tear it down.

Black & Pink’s “free world” membership started in Boston and has spread across the country. We will support one another, share the work of our organizing efforts, and grow our family inside and outside the walls. We would like to increase our national and international membership, creating chapters in more cities, towns, prisons, schools, and neighborhoods.

### WORDS WE USE

There are many words in our Statement of Purpose and Analysis that mean different things to different people. Here is what they means to us:

**Prison Industrial Complex** – The prison industrial complex is a system of control. It is the prisons and jails and detention centers- the concrete and steel buildings that warehouse people. The prison industrial complex is also how the government and companies work together to control, punish, and torture poor communities and communities of color. This includes the police. And immigration enforcement. And courts. And how the news and movies show “criminals.” And cameras in communities. And companies making money on prison phone calls. And how schools are set up to fail us. And many others ways that take power away from many, and keep it with those at the top. (Adapted from Critical Resistance)

**Abolition** – Abolition means a world where we do not use the prison industrial complex as an ‘answer’ to social, political, and economic problems. Abolition means that instead we make new ways to stop harm from happening. It means responding to harm when it does happen, without simply “punishing.” We will try to fix the causes of harm, instead of using the failed solution of punishment. This means harm will occur far less often. This is often called “harm reduction.” We will not use policing, courts, and prisons, which are making us less safe. Abolition means creating sustainable, healthy communities with the power to create safety. (Based on words by Rose Braz, former director of Critical Resistance)

**“Free World”** – We use “free world” for people not in prison, jail, or detention. We use “quotation marks” because we understand the word “freedom” to be complicated. Some people say none of us are free because the arms of the prisons, courts, and police reach into our communities, home, jobs, and schools. Some say freedom is within ourselves and that it can never be taken from us. When we say “free world,” we mean people not in prison, jail, or detention right now.

**LGBTQ** – These letters stand for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. We know that sexuality and gender are much bigger than these letters. People also call themselves: same gender loving, homosexual, homophile, transsexual, transvestite, nelly, asexual, Two spirit, intersex, sissy, dyke, and many others labels. We want to find better words for all people who identify outside of heterosexual and strict gender boundaries. For now, we use LGBTQ.

## HEARTS ON A WIRE SUBMISSION CALL

Dear Friends:

Your friends from Hearts on a Wire are seeking submissions for an important project. Hearts on a Wire is a Pennsylvania-based prison abolition collective made up of currently and formerly incarcerated transgender and gender variant people and their allies. They are building a movement for gender self-determination, racial and economic justice, and an end to the policing and imprisonment.

The Outside Collective of Hearts on a Wire is working with another Philadelphia-based group called the Philly Survivor Support Collective (PSSC). PSSC offers support to people who have experienced sexual abuse or assault. They help survivors attain a sense of justice and safety while consciously avoiding the legal system and envision a world without sexual violence. Often, survivors don’t find that the legal system is useful or helpful in their healing process and it that it increases harm.

Hearts on a Wire plans to collaborate with PSSC on a booklet that focuses on incarcerated transgender and gender variant people’s day-to-day survival. This publication will be made available to everyone on the **Hearts on a Wire** mailing list and online and to anyone **who submits something**. The goal of the publication is for survivors to know that we are not alone and that there are ways to resist, stay safer, and take care of ourselves and one another. We are seeking submissions from incarcerated transgender and gender variant people **from anywhere around the country**.

Here are some questions that might help you get started thinking about what you want to share. You are welcome to use these questions as a guide, or not. Feel free to submit art, poems, rants, observations, or any of your strategies for survival:

1. If you were to mentor someone or act as an older sibling to someone who was in prison or jail for the first time, what would you want them to know in order to be able to take care of themselves? What are some things you wish someone had taught you?
2. What do you do throughout your day on the inside that helps you maintain a positive sense of self?
3. What is a moment you are proud of in day-to-day survival? Perhaps a time when you felt you were able to more freely express yourself and/or your gender - a time when you didn’t give in to something that you didn’t want to think, feel, do?
4. Who is someone on the inside you can count on for emotional or spiritual support? How has this person helped you? How have you expressed vulnerability?
5. What motivates you?

We want your thoughts, stories, and reflections to reach others. We will be editing submissions with our experience of prison censorship in mind with the goal of keeping this publication from getting on the banned list. In constructing your answers, keep the censorship rules at your facilities in mind. Please tell us how you want to be credited for your submission (name and facility, anonymous, legal name).

While we want there to be a lot of space for reflection and sharing of stories and experiences, we are also looking for practical material that other incarcerated folks can access as a resource for dealing with their own situations in the hostile environment of incarceration. We have in the past received “how to” guides for identifying abusive relationships, filing complaints, and other strategies for staying safer. Please address submissions to:

Hearts on a Wire  
ATTN: PSSC Submission  
1315 Spruce Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Finally, we want to give a special thank you to Miss Juicy who first envisioned this project.

Love,  
Hearts on a Wire Outside Collective and the Philly Survivor Support Collective



Image from Hearts on a Wire

## CORPORATE CRIME VS STREET CRIME

Greetings of peace and love and may this letter find you richly spiritually blessed. I'm writing to share what I believe all of our brothers and sisters of Black & Pink and society at large needs to know: the difference between street crime vs corporate crime and the truth.

We need to reassess our understanding of crime and ask why it is that corporate crime advances virtually unhindered, while localized "street crime" has become such an obsession for so many. The answer lies somewhere in the mixed realm of our own hidden fears as a society and our sense of powerlessness in the face of crime, and the immense power of vested interests who gain so much from the current situation.

The Oxford English Dictionary gives a three-part definition for the word "crime." It is an act 1) punishable by law, 2) as being forbidden by statute, or 3) injurious to the public welfare.

As a society we focus almost exclusively on the first and second definitions, neglecting the third. Crimes are written into law at any given point in time by governments through congress, legislature, assemblies, decrees, or proclamations. Certain actions (for example traffic offenses) are made unlawful in order to protect what politicians perceive to be the interests of the common good, or else to protect and advance their own interests and those of their supporters. Thus, what may be a crime in one country, for example prostitution or cannabis (pot) smoking, may not be a crime in another.

The first two definitions do not demand a moral underpinning, though many laws and statutes obviously have a moral dimension. It is the third definition of crime as being "an act injurious to the public welfare" that implies a moral basis. The words demand a moral evaluation as to what constitutes public welfare or common good. This is precisely the point at issue in many areas involving corporate crime.

Corporate crime is endemic the world over. Very few are ever held responsible for its devastating effects. It reaches into virtually every aspect of our lives, yet so widespread is its influence, we are often unaware of its presence. It hits us in so many ways: from the added on costs in our supermarket to the pollutants in the air we breathe, from the hidden costs of our banking and financial systems to the cost of medicines we take for our illnesses. The tentacles of corporate crime touch all these areas and many more.

Yet we rarely speak of it, read of it, or hear of it for any sustained period. We have become totally preoccupied with individual "street crime," although corporate violence and crime inflict far more damage on society than all the street crime combined. Just one major tobacco company, for example, arguably kills and injures more people than all the street criminals put together. Public corruption (Wall Street) pollution (BP Oil), procurement fraud, financial fraud, and occupational homicide inflict incredibly serious damage on workers, consumers, citizens, and the environment. So, why on earth is our criminal justice system geared to sifting the poor and minor nonviolent offenders, pretending it is dealing with crime and social harm, when all the major harm is being done by the hidden rulers of our world, the multinational corporations?

A major reason for this is the consistent presentation by the media of crime as being primarily personal. Through newspapers, radio, the internet, and especially tabloid talk shows, and in news and entertainment on television (Cops, America's Most Wanted, etc.) crime is deliberately portrayed in manageable portions of murder, home invasions, muggings, burglaries, and theft, allowing the age-old notion of scapegoat full rein. We all sit back in our chairs and like to see the "bad guys" caught.

The public perception of crime is largely shaped by corporate media and tabloid television, which focus overwhelmingly on street crime, illegal drug use, robberies, and theft. If these media devoted proportionate time to the corporate muggings and homicides that are carried out through occupational accidents and starvation wages like at Wal Mart, public perceptions would shift to reflect reality more accurately. This will never happen. The same big business people who perpetuate corporate crime control the media through colossal advertising budgets, cross-directorship and ownership.

Yet all over the world the politicians and this same media have foisted upon the public the notion that major welfare (SSI) payments to the unemployed, the sick, the injured, the hungry, and the homeless are unaffordable (but America has trillions of dollars for war) because they cost too much. Beneficiaries are often presented as parasites preying off public funds. Benefit fraud is almost a cause celebre. People everywhere are being made to work for their welfare/SSI money as if they were responsible for their own plight. Yet, for example, tax breaks and handouts (bailouts & corporate welfare) for the rich 1% of the nation (\$600 billion) consume three times the amount that is spent on the poor through benefits (\$200 billion). Legal it may well be, but morally, this is big crime!

Troy, California

Dear Black and Pink Family,

June's issue struck a major chord within me, and here I am to harmonize therewith. First though, love you ALL, thank you for accepting me as part of your family. I really have no words to express this... Second, shout out to Kat in AZ, "Loves Ashes," Beautiful words from a no doubt beautiful person. Thank you for sharing them with me.

Okay, on to the chord... the good comrade spoke of things I too would seek to pursue. I've been deeply involved in the (criminal?) ((justice??!!)) system since age 12. I've seen the way what is called 'Revolution' works. Believe me, it stays roughly true to definition. Eventually 'The new boss is the same as the old Boss!'

We, as a demographic, are in a far better position than ever before, but it's not the moment of birth yet. Chrysalis has been established, but it hasn't yet cracked. We must think metamorphosis, not revolution. The same has not been acceptable for 240 years. You cannot affect the outcome if you don't change the ingredients.

History, laws, rules, etiquette even, all written by the winner. A different outcome in '45 and Daimler-Benz would have absorbed Chrysler far, far sooner than '98. But even the fact of the "merger" speaks volumes at this point. I'm not a "conspiracy nut," and to quote the popular joke "Anarchy has too many rules," but the rules must change.

The iron is nearly hot, the government is broke, and the loyalty base has shifted. You don't have to be in prison to see the indicators of the Fourth Reich- hate crime convictions are at an all time high, gender-orientation, race, religion, neighborhood, the only thing missing is formal declaration.

We, as a family, near and far, need to be ready. We need to know who to attract, who to target, and who to avoid. There are protocols put down 240 years ago to protect us, just as there's quite enough of us worldwide to make it work. The 1969 Stonewall was simply the slightest whiff. All we need do is stand.

In solidarity and beyond!

Tim, Nevada

Dear Black & Pink,

My name is Ray, I'm a 32-year-old Black bisexual male, and I'm proud of what I am and what I stand for. I am also proud of Monica Jones and Jennifer (BabyGirl) as well. I truly believe that Monica and Jennifer are both displaying an enormous amount of Courage, Wisdom, Beauty and Strength just by doing the things they are doing and by sayin' the things they are saying.

I am applauding Monica Jones because I read the article in the May 2014 issue about Monica Jones being arrested for "walking while Trans." I personally believe that they didn't convict Monica simple because of "manifesting prostitution," I believe in my heart that they convicted her because she is a transgender woman and they don't want to take the time to understand just who she is or what she believes in. But through it all I believe that she will stand strong because I don't have to know her just to know that like many other transgender women, Monica is strong and courageous as well.

And I read about Jennifer's Advocacy campaign and if I'm correct, I believe Gandhi once said, "Be the change that you want to see in the world," and the reason why I'm applauding you is because that is what you are being. Jennifer, whether you know this or not, your Advocacy Campaign gives faith and hope to many people who wake up in the morning without any faith and hope. Not only are you an inspiration to transgender women in California, but you are also a huge inspiration to the LGBQ/T community all over the world.

I hope the Black & Pink Newspaper continues to grow and prosper. I hope the California Prison Chapter continues to grow and prosper. And Jennifer and Monica, I hope that your courage, your wisdom, your beauty, and your strength continues to grow and prosper.

You in the Black & Pink family matter because ALL of you are beautiful inside and out.

Love,  
Roy, Texas

Dear Black & Pink,

Greetings to my new family. I just received my issue of Black & Pink, thank you.

I write this to tell ya'll I'm an openly gay man and I was beaten by a guard in May 2014 for being gay. Then he wrote me a shot for assaulting him! He used excessive force on me and messed up my knee, wrist, and head.

Well, today I saw the DHO and the shot was thrown out and expunged from my file! I was told by someone this cop has priors for using excessive force on people and I should file a tort on him, as he lied on the shot.

I'm being transferred, will get in touch. A note to Stick Man in PA- loved the poem, and I'd glad you're okay and still fighting.

With Love to All,  
Adam, Federal prison in California

## LETTERS TO OUR FAMILY CONTINUED

Dear Black & Pink Family,

Hello there, my name is Justin and I am a 28 year old gay man currently residing in the Pennsylvania DOC. I would like to thank you for the Newspaper and allowing me to be part of the B&P family. I cannot begin to express how much it means to me, to know that there are people out there like you all who actually care about someone like me.

Let me explain so you can understand what I mean....

To start, I was arrested on October 10, 2013 for unauthorized use of a motor vehicle. I was at the bar and ended up hooking up with this sexy guy. We left the bar a little before closing and went driving around looking for a spot where we could park and not be disturbed. Anyway, we were messing around when we heard someone tap on the window. I'm like OMG this can't be happening. I was so embarrassed, but that wasn't the end of it. We get out of the car and the cop asks for our ID's, asks whose car it is, and I'm like "It's his," pointing at the guy from the bar. The guy looks at me, then looks at the cop, then turns to run and gets 3 steps and the cop is on him. I'm like omg, omg, omg, this is not happening, and next thing I know I'm being slammed on the ground and handcuffed. Come to find out the car's stolen. I'm trying to tell the cops I don't know anything about a stolen car, I just met this guy, but they're not trying to hear it. I get to county jail, and the first person I write is my mom.

Now, my mother doesn't know I'm gay, like whenever I'm around her I'm the perfect hetero son, talking about girls and whatever. I've even had fake girlfriends over to her house. A little pathetic, right?

The only way I can explain it all to her is to tell her I'm gay, something I wasn't really trying to do while in jail. Or really at all, because of how she is. Like she's a religious fanatic, all "Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve." I'm pretty sure you know the type.

Ok, so a week after I write her I get a response in the mail and I'm hoping for good news. It ended up being the worst possible thing ever. What I read, no child should have to read from their mother. She wrote that I "must be mistaken and that she is not sure how I got her address. That her son is dead and that I am not to write that address again." It took me a while to fully understand what I was seeing, I was in shock. I don't know how long I cried, but the whole time I wished I was dead.

Every time I wrote, it was returned to sender. That was a year and a half ago. This is why it means so much to me to be part of the Black & Pink family. I may have lost my birth family, but I have gained an even bigger one with all of you. One who understands me and accepts me for who I am. I love you guys.

And now I'm in solitary confinement at the moment waiting to be transferred. It has been 6 months since I've had a breath of fresh air. They have me on P.C. Because some people were trying to extort me for money and sex. I had told all the individuals who were trying to extort me that if they did not leave me alone I would report them. I didn't know what else to do, you know? I'm not a fighter, I can't stand violence. Anyway, that did not work out well because about a week later they tried to stab me in the exercise yard. So I'm like yea, I've had enough of this. I packed all my stuff, and told the CO's I wanted to take self lock-up.

That was November 16th 2013 and I am still here. Since then I get verbally harassed since I'm openly gay, and I guess people find it amusing to torment me. I feel so alone most of the time, like I literally have no one to talk to, so whenever I receive Black & Pink it makes a huge difference. You guys and girls are the greatest and I honestly don't know what I would do without you.

Love Always,  
Justin, Pennsylvania

Dear My Black and Pink Family,

I'm loving you and the cause/commitment more than anything. I've been going through a lot, so I would like to share my thoughts.

First off, I've been in tune with the rest of the country with the Michael Brown case in Ferguson, MO, but I'm extremely mad/disappointed, and frustrated, because we keep seeing the same thing over and over, and over again. Racist white cops shooting and killing black people, and the most astonishing thing is they don't get prosecuted for it, making what they do so blatant, they're making examples out of us. Now I believe like the '60's and '70's with the Black Panthers and the civil rights movements that it will only be a matter of time before us, the community shoots back, and that time is very close. Justice will be served one way or the other, but still I pray and wish for the best.

I feel that I and others like me are fighting two or three losing battles. Number one is that we are minorities, Black and Latino, number two, we're gay/bisexual/lesbian/trans/etc., and number three, we've been incarcerated with little to no hope of being a great asset to society, so in a way it's like we're on the losing end either way you look at it.

The other thing is that I'm almost completely out of the closet, I just haven't told my mother, she has suspicions but I haven't confirmed them for fear that she'll reject me, but it's like the whole world knows except her (LOL).

So that brings me to my next thoughts, as I read your monthly newsletter, I always notice how people state abuse and negative backlash from other inmates in the present system, but being in jail for 15 years in

three different states, NY, MA, and Illinois, I can state for a fact that I've witnessed countless times dudes disrespect and downgrade homosexuals, but as soon as a real pretty transwoman come through, all these tough guys fall right out of the closet. I've even seen big homies of gangs that were highly ranked and respected, drop their flag and give it all up in harms way. Real danger to the point of life threatening to get them some ass, even devoted Muslims!! So I laugh, because I know for a fact that if they are disrespecting, harassing or hating, it's only because they want some too, and it only takes that one experience to come through for them to lose their cool, so don't be mad, or feel bad, because truth be told, I was one of them gang bangers that disrespected, and feel in love with a transwoman, so I know firsthand.

With my love and prayers, until next time. I love you all. From your brother and friend,

Julio

B&P Family,

Praise this day my letter greets the family in good health and spirits. I'm elated at most of the letters that you print so our gender generation can share the horrific treatment institutions inflict upon our vulnerable incarceration time!

I wish I could get in touch with Ms. Chelsea Manning—the military one who was strong enough to admit she came out to the armed forces and wants her Gender treatment. But they reject her serious request! I've read she's doing possible life at Ft. Leavenworth Security Men's Prison! I sympathize with her incarceration as I myself am doing life at a California Prison, I been doing time now for the last 35 years, and I served as a soldier and did an 18 month tour in Vietnam back in 1970, '71 and '72, 5 yr induction of military service.

In closing do take care and stay safe to the B&P family members who make it possible for us Gender Girls! And to everyone suffering in Ad Seg and Solitary Confinement- your survival is an inspiration to read about. God Bless you all and happy summer! It will get very scorchy!!!

In Solidarity,  
John, California

Dearest Black & Pink Family,

My name is Timothy but I go by Toy. Once I got arrested I decided I needed an alias due to the news coverage on my case. I got Boy Toy tattooed on my fingers. I killed the old me and became Toy.

I am a 38 year old Federal inmate. I am currently in the "SHU" in California for my safety. I am awaiting a transfer. Since my arrest in March of 2012 I have not had any issues with anyone due to my sexuality. I have been very lucky. The men I have met became my friends and family.

Once the news broke about my crime I lost everyone. All my friends and family have left my life. I no longer have contact with the men I met in jail. The hardest part, and the only thing I cry about, is the loss of my son. I was a full time single Dad. I adopted my son after his mother lost her battle with drugs and overdosed. The powers that be terminated my parental rights. I was very close to the people who adopted him but they refuse to communicate with me. It has been 2 years since I saw my baby boy. He turns 10 this year. The very last image I have of him is him blowing me a kiss as he walked out of the visiting area. I've never felt so alone around so many.

My life will always be in danger because I am a sex offender. I have a 30 year sentence and I fear I may not get to see life beyond razor wire. I just started my sentence and I am extremely scared. I don't want to die...at least I don't want to feel the pain that may lead to my death. Being gay could be a blessing or a curse here in prison. I've already met men...through 2 closed doors...that want to "own" me. I hear stories about gay bashing and rape. I am not a fighter. I'm timid. I failed at being a dad. I failed as a son, as an uncle, as a brother, as a nephew. I start to think that maybe I deserve to be treated poorly.

I altered my victims' lives, and though I did not take anyone's life, from what I hear, it would have been more accepting if I had killed. For what I've done, according to other inmates, is the worst crime anyone could commit. I expect that many reading this would hate me too because of my crime. It's a sad, lonely feeling knowing people want me dead.

I also fear that I will never truly be loved again. Any relationship I may have with another man will always only be temporary and based on desperation and lack of options. Of course that is assuming that there is something as true love or a lifetime relationship based on love. Since part of probation after my release is that I not associate with any other felons, no friendship will ever last.

Well, that's my pathetic life. I hope you all may reach out to me, even if only in spirit. I don't want to die. I miss my son. I miss my family. I miss my friends. I miss the little things...Taco Bell. And I miss freedom. I still can't believe I screwed up my life so terribly.

I'll write again once I move, Pray I land in a prison that I can be part of the General Population. Pray for me. Pray for my son. I will pray for all of you. In spirit we are all family. Thank you B & P for holding us all together.

With love and respect,  
Toy, CA

## LETTERS TO OUR FAMILY CONTINUED

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I recently came across a Black & Pink zine publication. As I read, I came to the realization that a struggle is a struggle: and discrimination, abuse, and harassment happens to us all. So when I speak and think, I speak to the masses who are suppressed by incarceration. Actions speak louder than words, but the pen is mightier than the sword! Knowing how to use the pen effectively and not in a moot, frivolous or rhetorical manner. It is important for prisoners to become familiar with prison policy, grievance procedures, and your constitutional rights as a prisoner. When you are faced with peril or harassment there are several basic steps you should take:

Write a complaint to the Custody Supervisor  
 File an Informal Grievance  
 File a complaint to the Commissioner of the D.O.C.  
 File a legal 1983 complaint if your constitutional rights have been violated.

When choosing to pursue any or all of these avenues, it is important to do two things: 1) Always state names, dates, times, locations; the who, when, what, where, and why; 2) Always make copies of your complaints, grievances, letters and documents. This is known as "Creating a paper trail" and it will act as proof to your complaints and will help people in authority positions better understand your situation. In closing, I encourage and even dare you not to voice your emotions to your offender, oppressors or tormentors: Nah, I dare you to pick your pen up and let it speak for you and rule in your lives.

In struggle,  
 Cochies, Indiana

Dear B&P family!

First of all, sorry for taking so long for helping. I really appreciated receiving a Birthday Letter. It was the only one I received this year.

Between lockdowns and property searches I was unable to obtain postage and writing supplies.

I've already passed the March Newspaper on to someone else, so I can't remember who wrote about HIV+ people having uninformed and unsafe sex with HIV- people.

I have been HIV+ officially since February 1988, unofficially since 1986. There is controversy as to whom and whom I was infected by. Yet, that does not matter. No matter who gave me this virus, intentionally or not, I share the responsibility. I was the one who had unprotected sex, in a very high-risk environment, for several years. I gave no thought of safe sex. Honestly, I never had a clue there was such a thing.

Yes, it is very wrong for someone who has HIV/AIDS to have unprotected sex, especially without informing their partner. Yet you must remember, sex with another person requires two people. Do not take it for granted your potential partner is being open and honest. Protect yourself, first and foremost. Another thing, ask your partner.

Some of us get caught up in the moment. You do not think of asking, "Are you HIV positive?" before you drop your pants. For those of us who are positive, one way to remove the stigma: be honest, be open, be willing to answer questions and lead by example. We must show others that the HIV/AIDS virus does not make the person. How we handle our responsibility of handling the virus is what makes us who we are. I wish also to send a small shout out to Freaky and Angel in Texas prisons. All my love to all my family, brothers and sisters in and out of prison. Stay strong, stay safe and keep up the good fight always.

Marvin "Cliff," Texas

Hey Everybody,

I just wanted to share an experience I went through here in prison that changed me into a better person. I hope this helps somebody out there struggling with their inner demons.

I'm 29 and I've been down for over 5 years with over 10 left. This is my first time in prison. When I was 23, I committed a sexual crime against a 12 year old girl. Even worse, I hurt her again when I took it to trial rather than taking responsibility for my wrong actions and forced her to relive it out loud. The words of her letter to the court during my sentencing stung deeply, "HE MADE ME HATE MYSELF" was the very last sentence she had typed, and it replays in my mind every moment of everyday.

I voluntarily joined a Sex Offender Therapy Program not really knowing what to expect, but knowing it was the right thing to do; if anything showing the respect due to my victim. While I was there, I had to look down inside myself and see what I hated. It's so easy to say good things about ourselves; to tell another person how funny we are, or how much of a great listener we are, but how many of us are being honest with ourselves? How many of us have looked down inside of ourselves at all the dark places hiding in the shadows that we don't want to see? Places we pretend not to see because we're terrified of discovering that aspect about ourselves?

Over a year later I looked in the mirror and realized that I'm a selfish, inconsiderate, manipulative person...and I cried and cried, because I hated what I had done, and who I was becoming. I cried for the pain I put my victim and her family through; I cried for the pain I put my mother and my family through; I cried for my son, who was 2 when I got locked up and who will be

18 when I get out. And the most ironic thing was, I had these traits BECAUSE I refused to acknowledge them; I only chose to see my good traits. Until that moment, I had let toxic shame hang over my head.

But finally, I asked myself this question-- "How much is enough?" I realized that I didn't have to let WHAT I DID define who I am. I realize that what I did was wrong, and I'm terribly sorry for it, but I learned that tomorrow's choices make the best apology for yesterday's actions. I can't change what I did, but I can choose what I do from this point on, and I won't have to convince people of my sincerity; they'll see it for themselves.

Well Family, thank you for reading my story. I understand some of you may have judgments about it, and I don't blame you; we all make our decisions, and we have to learn to live with them. I just hope my letter has helped, even if only one person. Be safe, stay humble & true to yourself.

Sincerely,  
 Jeff, Illinois

Dear Family,

How are you doing? Well myself, I am blessed by the best. I must say it is such a hot summer this year! Well my reason for writing is to let my family know how I am holding up. I have made the Ext. lockdown board on April 10th, 2014 and that is only after being on it for 17 months. Well this prison got a 6-14 week backlog to go to the compound. This is week 13 for me with one more to go. Amen to that!

As everyone may know my name is Brielle Brooks and I am a very much proud Gay Queen and love that no matter what I will be myself. Well also as it's getting close to going home in 2016 I say to myself, it has been some time since you been down and the world has changed a lot. I ask that as I go to the next level in my life, that my family at Black & Pink keep me in their prayers. One thing I learned in my 7 years I've been in prison in the state of Louisiana is that "one must stay strong and more to do better with self." As my poem says that I have wrote, "Still I stand and never will I fall." You must always stand on all that you go through in life; because if you fall then you are giving up! Remember that!

I also would like to thank our sister in California "Zarabee" for the shout out in her poem in June 2014 newspaper. To you Ms. Zarabee I am happy and blessed to know that the words that I wrote can be and is a blessing in your and other's life. Stay strong Ms. Zarabee from California and my prayers go out to you and the rest of the Black & Pink family. Before I close this letter, but never my love, I want you all to remember these words. I tell you, "No matter what come your way, and what you might go through, just know that God will see you through it all."

Until next time, I love you all with all my heart and soul.  
 Your sister in the struggle,  
 Brielle, Louisiana

Dear Black & Pink,

I was transferred from a friendly queer institution to a land of the unknown. The prison I was at in California had a large Gay Family Population, which felt comfortable for an in the closet queer like myself.

With the support of the Gay Family population at that prison, I had begun to come out of the closet. Since coming from a right wing lifestyle and being a Paraplegic Bilateral Amputee because of my crime, it was difficult for me to shed all this baggage, and become my true self. But with Family Support began doing so. Shared with institutional social workers my gayness, and secret lifestyle. Then felt comfortable enough to tell my sister. Who to my surprise, welcomed me still with love and affection, not putting me down. And was supportive of my decision to come out of the closet.

Then fell in love with a handsome man of another race, who loved me back. Letting my sister know of this also. And her being supportive of it also. Then to my surprise, told my niece and nephew who were also supportive of me.

So slowly but surely, began sharing my gayness with others, and not feeling ashamed of it. Then like a rug being pulled out from underneath me, was put up for transfer, then transferred. Leaving my loving and supportive inside Family behind me.

The confidence I had built is now at a standstill. Will always be gay, no matter what, but some places make it rougher to share our feelings with other people. Like when the so called fellows, say look at that queer punk over there. This burns me up. One, because I am the same as the queer punk they are talking about, two if you feel that way, you're truly not my friend.

So I'm asking our LGBTQ Family at Black & Pink to all pray for me in hopes I can continue growing and being comfortable in sharing who I am, a gay white male.

Love your Brother,  
 Larry, California

P.S. United We Stand,  
 Divided We Fall,  
 So let's stay join together,  
 And fight for our Cause...

Hello to all the people of Black & Pink Newspaper. I am proud that others are out there fighting the fight against the enemies that we face as a LGBTQI community. Don't ever give up hope, faith and love for each other!!!

I recently have come out of the restrictive housing unit (RHU) of this institution that I am currently housed, for fighting against a man that "thought" he could "punk out" a transwoman, who happened to be my best friend and cellmate. As both of us are transwomen on hormones, we took justice in our hands that day, and gave him a dose of reality- "we will NOT allow a hater to intimidate us because we're labeled as beautiful women and weak!" I believe that he got the message. My cellmate and I received a disciplinary offense report (DOR) for battery. The guy that we defended ourselves from received a DOR for harassment, even though he had instigated the fight and punched me- Go figure!

The day after we had our brief "victory," the other men in this institution gave us "props" for what we did that day. It was a sense of accomplishment, relief, success, etc. I strongly advise others that violence is NOT the answer! Nor do I condone it, but I will not stand around and watch another one of my family members of the LGBTQI community be harassed, hurt, or bullied for any reason regarding their sexual preference or identity. I vowed that after being abused while in prison because I am a transwoman, I will not stand and watch this hurt and disgust continue, so as long as I have a breath in my body! As of to date me and my cellmate have had no further problems.

It is very hard being a transwoman in prison, and I know other transwomen know exactly what I am talking about. Always remember my fellow trans, gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex, queer friends that WE are who we are for a reason, we have been chosen to experience life as we are because we are strong, beautiful, loving and intelligent.

Live and let live!

Sincerely,

Adree, Idaho

Dear Black and Pink family,

To begin this letter, I would like to say: I love all of you. I thank you all and pray daily for your safety and happiness. Ever since I began reading the Black & Pink Newspaper, a smile has been on my face every day.

My name is Evgeny (Yev-Ghen-ee). My nickname is Lil'Russia, I was born in Russia and was adopted by an American family when I was seven. I am a 22 year old Bi-sexual, I'm not attracted to any "gender" but merely people themselves. :)

I am currently on a Max unit in Utah. But still smiling, I was given a 5-year re-hearing, I go see the board July 2018. The board of pardons got me with no "lubricant." A 1-15 car-theft, but my girlfriend died in the wreck we were in. R.I.P. So the board assumed I purposely wanted to wreck the stolen car and kill both her and myself. Ugh! Sickening.

A little about my background. My birth parents were Mafia in Russia, they attempted, well it was my "Mom," she tried drowning me. My adoptive "mom" physically, sexually, mentally and emotionally abused me from the ages of seven to thirteen. I ran away at thirteen and have been living on my own ever since. Well it's quite a story, I'm writing a book about it and I hope when I'm done, I hope to "change the eye and mind" of others. The book is titled "It was meant to be." It's an emotional experience, but hey, I'm still smiling, not only for myself, but for all of you.

You all mean so much to me. Thank you family. :) Keep smiling, I'm here with you all through thick and thin. If possible, I would like to help any of you the best I can, through mail or through the Newspaper. I want all of you to know, for all those "Haters" out there, I love you all double the amount per "Hater." I hope that makes sense :)

<3 Evgeny AKA, Lil' Russia, Utah

Dear Black and Pink Fam.,

Just recently began receiving B&P. It's nice to hear the positive news from all of you & I'm sorry for all of you who are suffering.

Well I'm stuck in the S.H.U. (Security Housing Unit) here in California. Been stuck in this torture chamber since 2011 (April). It's nothing I'd ever wish on my worst enemy, who right now is anyone with a badge.

I'm currently trying to finish up some small technicalities in order to file and litigate A 42 U.S.C. ~ 1983 Lawsuit & have a little advice for the person having problems with the PLRA's (Prison Litigation Reform Act) "Exhaustion of Administrative Remedies." If you truly are being denied access to the Institution's Grievance Process, look up ~ 2 (e) (a), 42 U.S.C.A. ~ 1997 (e) (a) of the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act.

It states, basically, that where prison officials prevent, thwart, or hinder a prisoner's efforts to avail themselves of Administrative Remedies, they rend that remedy "unavailable" & a court will excuse prisoner's failure to exhaust administrative remedies. Hope this helps. I'm facing similar problems of my appeals not being properly processed & many of them just disappear altogether.

I also wanted to ask that B & P find a small space, permanently, for the address Steven provided in the June Issue for the: Jailhouse Lawyers Handbook, c/o The Center for Constitutional Rights, 666 Broadway 7th Floor, New York, NY 10012.

This is an essential for all imprisoned people and it has a good section

for trans people as well as a lot of good info for Medical Issues. We all need to know what our rights are & have a responsibility to educate ourselves on ways to preserve our rights.

Alright now everyone, I love you all & hope you're all well. If not keep your head up & know you have people who do care behind you.

Sincerely,  
Zack, California

Dear Black & Pink family,

First off I send my love to all y'all! I love how open everyone is in their letters. And how strong y'all are for being out in the open about your sexuality. I can't say the same about myself, cause I'm not out in the open about my sexuality. I'm an undercover bisexual because being out in the open would put me in serious harms way. Since I am a member of an organization and have been since I was on the streets. So these 13 year I've been down have been frustrating both emotionally and sexually.

I am writing in because I want to respond to a letter I saw in my June newspaper. I had never heard the term 'Groomer' before. So once I read that letter from James, it really touched home. I'm proud of him for putting it out there like that. There are people out there who will befriend you with ulterior motives. I want to tell my story because of this. I was 17 years old and on my way to prison waived into adult court. I was placed in a cell with a man who was twice my size and age. Who was also very muscular. He befriended me, and since he had been to prison for a long bit previous to this, he showed me how to work out and we had numerous conversations late into the night about what prison was like. He was very open about his-self and his body. I got comfortable with him being naked in the cell with me at times. He would come back from the shower and dry off in our cell applying lotion. Or bird bathing in our cell late at night after our workouts. I would watch him and stare at him. I had never been with another man but I was becoming very curious wondering what it would be like with him.

Long story short, one night our conversations led to him asking me if I wanted him to show me some tricks to making it in prison. Not knowing exactly what he meant, I said yes. He quickly got up expecting me to give him oral sex. I refused and he wrestled me to the ground explaining to me how easy it would be to have his way with me, and what would I do when there's 2, 3, or 4 guys trying the same thing. I gave in. That's when he turned the tables on me. He got up saying he'd never hurt me. He was just trying to show me how vulnerable I was. And he didn't want me to do anything I didn't want to do. By then I was all in and ready to go, so we did. I have to say that I was torn between 2 emotions after it was all said and done. #1. I hated what happened. #2. I loved it cause I had never been more turned on in my life.

Anyways... if you've been in the same situation don't feel like you're alone or that it's hopeless. We can all grow from situations no matter how negative they are. We can take the negative and become stronger as people. Had this never happened I might've never explored my sexuality. Then I might never have realized I love being with men as much as I love women. I do wish that the circumstances were different and I wasn't taken advantage of.

So with that I'll close with all my love going out to y'all, and especially to the free world members of our family who work so hard on making and sending out this publication! Trust me when I say your time & effort don't go unnoticed. It's nice to know there are people who care enough to put the paper into print for us. Til the next one.....everybody keep your heads up.....and stay strong

Much love, Always  
John

Black and Pink,

Foremost I'd like to send my love out to all my LGBTQ family. My name is Robin, and I've been reading the Black and Pink newsletter for over a year. I've seen beautiful letters of love, tearful letters of loneliness and heartbreak. I've viewed letters of heart crushing atrocities committed against my people, I've seen outstanding artwork and poetry from talented people. I've got to witness my family come together to Fight against the prison administration to try to right wrong doings, as in the case of Jenni from California. I've viewed articles of LGBTQ standing up to the "powers that be" that try to make laws and prison policies to take away our identity, and every story, article, poetry, and piece of artwork touches my heart. I have the most beautiful family. They may try to put us down, but we will always rise and overcome. (If you get to read this letter,) every time someone tries to put you down, every time you feel lost or forgotten, remember that you are never alone, you have a family that is there for you. Pick up a pen and write a letter, draw a picture or write a poem and all your LGBTQ Black & Pink family will be with you in heart and spirit.

My love is always with you,  
Robin, New York

**TAKE OUR SURVEY! STARTS ON PAGE 11**

Dear Black & Pink Family,

My name is Colorado aka Shawn. This is my first or second time sending in a letter. But I want to thank you for making this letter/newspaper. I have been receiving your letter since 2011 and it makes me proud to be a gay male in the Texas Prison System. I am openly gay as well. Have many tattoos to represent who I am. I have pride tattooed on my back, I have a tramp-stamp and my lover's name on my leg and ringfinger. I am not afraid to admit that.

I want the same hope for my brothers and sisters out there in the prison-industrial complex (PIC) because we deserve equal rights just as everyone else. I have been a victim of oppression since I have been put in ad-seg. I am experiencing extreme discrimination and neglect, because I am an LGBTQ family member and an MHMR patient as well. I am being denied medical and mental support by the system itself. And being taken advantage of seriously. No mail or anything, this sucks.

I have six months 'til I discharge and go home. And like I said, I wish the best for all my family out in the LGBTQ community in prison. My prayers go out to everyone that is struggling in an oppressive system, dealing with being forced to work for free, having to pay ungodly fees and deal with isolation and pain and separation. I hope to get out and help make a change in the PIC because it needs it. We need to stand together and make it happen! As we are making it happen in the world we can make it happen in the PIC. KEEP UP THE FIGHT!! God loves you and so do I.

Sincerely, Your incarcerated brother,  
Shawn aka Colorado

Hey everyone! All you queens, faeries, dykes and fags- the proud and loud of the gay world! It's Ceri, lettin' you all know that you are beautiful, and special and loved. I wish I could reach all of you out there and in prison- to express my feeling of happiness and belonging in this world.

Honey, we are a force. And we will be heard- and respected. The battles rage on for equality all around us. In the streets and the prisons, and the courtrooms and in the media. Take heart and be mindful that whatever you're goin' through- you're not alone.

I see it even on my unit here in Texas- we're coming out by droves. Peoples of all color are droppin' their facades and lettin' their rainbow show! It's an intriguing and wonderful time to be alive. So if you're in the closet, there is much to gain from coming out. I know there are many of you on the fence who don't show to others what you are- well there's never been a better time than now to let go of your false self.

I leave as I came, with love in my heart- and compassion for you all. I just hope my words are a balm to someone out there, bye!

Love,  
Ceri, Texas

Dear Black & Pink,

My name is Shawn, I am a black gay male incarcerated in a California prison. And I just received my first issue of Black & Pink. What a wonderful forum for the fam-bam to share their collective experience. I am at the end of a five year term, down to the last months. And I plan to continue to be a part of the Black & Pink community with my full support to the Fam.

The last few years have been an eye opener to the hardships that the fam must endure. I have been involved in the politics of prison, taking direct action against homophobic/transphobic violence on a daily basis. As you know, staff couldn't care less how the fam is treated by other inmates or by staff themselves. So we organized and we take no disrespect at all and trust me the fam will act up and shut it down if need be. There is strength in numbers, that is why this forum is necessary.

We are organized. We are strong. Don't get it twisted, weak and feeble we are not. Gay, Bi, Trans, Black, Latino, White, from up north and down

south- we are one. So always make a distinction between your rights and your privileges, and fam remember in order to win the war, you must fight in it.

Peace, Love, Respect to you,  
Your brother in arms,  
Shawn aka 727, California

Dear Black and Pink,

Happy Spring Time, my hope is all of you are doing well and in good health/ spirits. Things are difficult for me right now so I need your prayers and love. Currently I'm entering into a battle in the Northern District Courts of New York against the mental health contractors of New York State Dept. of Corrections for "failure to protect from harm" and "denial of medical/ psychiatric care." The care and prevention of suicidal inmates in NYSDOCs is a joke and woefully insufficient, and its time for someone who has been nearly-failed by the system that is supposed to protect us to stand up and say enough!

You see I've been struggling with severe depression, anxiety, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and often find it difficult to get out of bed every morning...not because I can't, but because it's hard to see a reason to when you face a sentence of "Twenty-five to Life" for defending yourself from domestic abuse and rape. All I ever wanted in life was to find that person that would love & accept me for me, and to build a Family with him...and to do that would make a difference for others in my community. When I was arrested I had just reenlisted in the US Army Nat. Guard, and was pursuing my degree in Sociology; half of my dream was a reality, all I missed was love & a family...because being beaten & raped weekly- sometimes daily- is not love. Its hard to imagine that I've ended up here when all I wanted was a simple life and unconditional love.

So please pray and send good thoughts & vibrations my way and if you have any advice for Section 1983's (42USC) or how to get a contingency/ pro bono lawyer please do let me know.

Revolutionary Greetings,

To all my Black and Pink family. I'm currently in isolation in Arizona. I've been here for a few years and have eight (8) or more to go. Being locked down 24/7 gives one time to work on body, mind and soul. Being that there are no job opportunities in this unit my funds are non-existent. Seeing that I have many years and not much to do, I've been trying to find some kind of higher education. I already have my G.E.D. and I've written to countless other organizations. None were able to help me. So, I'm reaching out to the Black &Pink family. If anyone out there knows of some kind of free education to inmates can you please submit it to Black & Pink's Newsletter submissions. It would be greatly appreciated and used.

Forwards ever,  
Backwards never!  
Billy, Arizona

Dear Good Folks,

I am writing about an article that was in the Denver Post in December 2013, "Lawsuit says thousands of inmates held too long," by Kirk Mitchell. It appears that the Colorado Dept. of Corruption- or Correction (CDOC) has been cooking the time-comp books so that inmates are kept in prison for months or years (!) longer than their sentence requires.

This win in the courts could result in literally thousands of inmates being ordered released by the court. The inmates may also be awarded cash damages for every day of illegal incarceration. The lawyer filing the case, David Lane, is no friend of CDOC- he has filed a discrimination suit against them for abuse of a transgender person and won; he is a friend to the LGBT community.

The public propaganda from the System is that CDOC is a necessary expense to the taxpayer to protect "the public" from all the "bad people" - us inmates. This is a bogus assertion. Last year Forbes listed the prison system as the fifth largest industry in Colorado. And it is a business. It removes "excess labor" from the marketplace and provides thousands of jobs- prison guards, office workers, suppliers of food, canteen goods, shoes (most made in China), clothing, services, etc. All jobs supported by imprisonment.

I'm not writing to see "my name in the paper." I want to provide information that helps damage the prison industrial complex and that may give hope to the thousands nationwide in the LGBT community who have been abused by the so-called justice system and have had their lives destroyed by incarceration in the prisons in every state.

All LBGT persons in Corrupt-orado prisons need to read the Denver Post article and ask for correct time-comp. Furthermore, prisoners in other states might want to look at their time-comps. If CO is cooking the books to prevent releasing people, then other crafty prison officials in other states may be doing the same.

Sincerely,  
John T. (grandma), Colorado

Art by Trevor



Dear Black & Pink,

And to all my brothers and sisters that's in the struggle.

Once again this is Ms. Jazzie. Getting at my LGBTQ family with some advice on relationships in prison. I been in prison for about 17 ½ years, and in this time, I had my share of bad relationships. But I refuse to have anybody treat me less than the queen that I am. I don't care how much money you got or you the baddest or how fine you are, one thing I will not tolerate, and that is the hitting shit!! I don't play that at all. Period!! You're going to respect me and I'm going to respect you.

I know that a lot of the girls become a victim, because of their financial status. And with no outside support, I know that it can be hard. Just because a man take care of you, it doesn't give him the right to put his hands on you. I have seen girls put up with this bullshit because they feel there's nowhere else to go. I myself love to have the best of everything and my man make that happen. And I'm always willing to help the girls out. Yes I been blessed to have a good husband, who care and truly love me, but he also encourages me to do for myself. Just because my people on the outside left me for dead, that is not an excuse to feel sorry for myself, and not to try to better myself.

So I'm letting all my LGBTQ family know that it feels good to be independent. And men love that. Don't let no man control you. So I challenge my LGBTQ family that's behind these wall, and in the free world, to dig deep within yourself to find the willpower to move forward no matter how hard it get. Instead of putting your sister down, pick her up. I truly believe that we can make a difference, but we must stick together. I want the girls to know that they are special and deserve to get treated no less than the queen she is. Walk with pride, purpose, and dignity. Brothers and & Sisters let's work together so no one is abused physically & mentally. I want you to be happy and make sure the person you with makes you happy, and makes you feel like the woman or man you are. Don't limit yourself and don't mess up a good thing once you find it. Well, that's all for now. So stay strong and keep your head up.

I love you. Your sister in the struggle 4 life,

Ms. Jazzie, California

Dear Black & Pink Family,

Hello everyone, especially all my incarcerated sisters out there.

My name is Lennea and I am currently in the Federal System. I had transitioned in 2002 and lived as my gender of choice (i.e. female) until I was incarcerated in February 2010. I was 40 years old when I had finally transitioned and thought it was the hardest thing I had ever done but with the greatest reward... My true happiness. Then I came to prison and realized transitioning in the 'Real World' wasn't near as hard as I thought.

I have been incarcerated for four years and have battled with the system (and still do) and mostly won all battles. I am on the complete medical protocol treatment and have been since 2011. I have been issued bras and panties, they allowed me to purchase a bathrobe from the women's facility, and really, staff and administration have been very supportive considering the institution is in the southern Bible Belt.

I will write again as I have more news. In exiting, I will say that change is hard but well worth the fight, pick up your pens, file everything you can and all items possible to our cause.

Love Always,

Lennea, Federal System Girl

Dear Black and Pink Brothers and Sisters:

As-salamu alaykum (Peace Be Upon You)! First let me say I am proud of you all for standing up for what you believe in. And I love every single one of you for that! Thank you all.

My name is Naji and I am a 48-year-old Muslim who is bisexual. I enjoy Black and Pink so much that I sent it to my daughters who are lesbian, as well and to my friend Billie. There is no doubt in my mind they are enjoying the paper as much as I have.

Anyhow, the reason I am writing is because of Teddy in Iowa. Teddy, No One has the right to force anyone to have sex with them! I don't care if it's in prison or on the streets! Because of this you have the right to sue 'IDOC' for not protecting you from other inmates. So, I advise you to check your policy dealing with PREA, and your local laws, as well as Federal laws about your rights to be safe from staff and inmates. I would bet my top dollar someone there has Prison Legal News as well as Jailhouse Lawyer's Handbook.

People, you need to understand and know your rights. Please do not expect to be treated fairly. All DOCs are their own worst enemy. Understand your two issues are 'Conditions of Confinement' and 'Safety.' But you must put in 'Grievances,' or your case will be dismissed before you even get started. I don't like the way DOC's lawyers will behave. God please forgive me, but you may have to backdate your grievance. Anyhow, you must show the courts you tried to fix the issue with the prison officials first!

Also look to see if your prison has a Hotline. Like the one here in Arizona. Here in Arizona it's completely anonymous and free. If I am correct all states must have something similar to the one we have. If not ask the Attorney General of your state if they plan on starting one. Use Arizona's as an example. People don't be afraid to tell your Attorney General about issues like this in your prison system. Tell the media about the conditions within your prison.

Teddy, I am glad you're alive to tell your story. And I am sorry that you're having to go through this situation. You can still be the advocate for those in your state. Again, I thank you for telling us about your situation. If I were there I would give you all the help in the world.

Anthony, Arizona

Dear Black & Pink,

Hello, my family, I send my love and respect to ask for y'all helping me organize this movement throughout the penitentiaries and out in Society called- The Royal Cartel. I feel it would solve a lot of problems with dudes beating up on our family- you punch on one you punch on all. We're not a gang, we unite as one to uplift our family. We start a store up in the penitentiary and bring dudes to the table as one and protect our family. Family, we have a chain of command, rules we live by, and a structure we follow as well. Please let me know what you think. I'm allowed to write other prisoners. [Sorry Tank, we are not publishing full addresses at this time to prevent the newspaper from being rejected for "inmate-to-inmate communication."]

Sincerely,  
Tank/Frankie, Ohio

## ON THE INSIDE ARTWORK FORM

Black & Pink is facilitating the revival of the art program in a new way, called On the Inside! If you are an artist, here's how it will work. Create any artwork that you would like (drawings, cards, paintings). We are seeking art drawn in ball point pen or pencil on letter-sized copy paper. The exhibit is taking shape along the following themes: portraits, self-portraits, spirituality, erotic, love, advocacy, gender, pop culture, celebrities, sports cars, crime & punishment, and prison life. Some of the artwork will be accepted for an upcoming exhibit; the artist will be promptly compensated \$50 for all accepted artwork (except \$10 for cards) and postage expenses incurred. Any artwork that isn't accepted for the exhibit for any reason will be promptly returned to the artist, or other address. If your artwork is accepted for the Exhibition, you assign all right, title and interest in the work to us (in other words you transfer ownership of the art and its copyrights to the Exhibit coordinators) as consideration for participation in the show. The artwork will never be resold, and will likely be donated to an LGBTQ Archive in years to come.

**UPDATE: CARDS ARE NO LONGER ACCEPTED. PLEASE DO NOT SUBMIT ANY CARDS. Please do not write your name and number anywhere on the front of the artwork to protect your privacy. We are all excited to see what you create! Please fill out a questions 1 through 6 once, and questions 7 through 10 on separate slip like this for each piece of artwork you submit. Please mail the artwork with the information below on slips to:**

**On the Inside, PO Box 173, 2658 Griffith Park Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90039**

1)Your preferred name for the exhibit. We will only include the first initial of your last name in the exhibit.

2)Your gender pronouns (eg. she / he / xe / they).

3)How do you identify? (Optional: gender, sexuality, race, age).

4)Your legal name, number, and mailing address.

5)If my artwork is not accepted for the exhibit:

Send it to my address (please list)

Send it to another address (please list)

Black & Pink can keep and display it

6)Preferred method of compensation:

Donation into commissary account (Please include deposit slips or instructions):

Magazines/books (Details)

Other:

7)Title of artwork (for display at exhibit).

8)Description of artwork (for display at exhibit).

9)Anything else you'd like the exhibit curator to know about the artwork or about yourself which can be shared / feel free to write on another page, and please note that the exhibit curator is not able to be a penpal):

## LETTERS TO OUR FAMILY CONTINUED

Dear Family & Friends,

Over the years, a substantial majority of people have expressed to me that they find comments in the Black and Pink newspaper "depressing" or "dramatic" because we don't report any or much good news. One reason for that, of course, is because there has been precious little "good news" emanating from the American criminal justice system over the past several decades. But amid the overall picture of gloom & doom, there are the occasional bright spots of people, such as myself, who not only survive imprisonment in the American gulag, but who are very successful in spite of our incarceration.

As someone who has continuously championed for the rights of prisoners and abolishing the Prison Industrial Complex, I observed long ago that despite a little rhetoric to the contrary, most politicians and many citizens in this country really do not like the idea of prisoners becoming successful. They do not want ex-prisoners to commit more crimes... but the mainstream idea of success is for former prisoners to work menial jobs for low wages. It really upsets people when former prisoners do well in society socially and economically, and most notably, no one in a position of power is stepping forward to claim any credit for the occasional outstanding success story that they are for the pyrrhic failure of the American criminal justice system as a whole.

Having millions of former prisoners means that while many have become "success" stories after release, a certain number have become very successful. One example is the current actor Danny Trejo, another example to come is my upcoming success in the Circuit Court for Montgomery County, Maryland. Follow my case and future articles to get a more in depth understanding of my plight and purpose herein this labyrinth.

During the ten years of my incarceration, I'm aware that low self-esteem is pervasive throughout this country. For a long time, prisoners have been convinced that they are losers; pathetic; failures; and so some play up to such roles! Fortunately not everyone buys into it. My family at Black and Pink found me and my story to be inspiring with the adversity I have overcome and struggle forth to conquer, as well as the advice I have for anyone I can reach.

Please understand that as a monthly newspaper, that we at Black and Pink are constrained by how timely our coverage of prisoner issues can be. We are counting on all of our supporters to continue to collectively support us, and carry on shining a light upon our resistance in here. This is the time for change in these prisons, and the movement to do is growing across the country. Without the people's support we cannot be successful. All support- no matter the size and content- comes together as a powerful force. Black and Pink have already brought more mainstream exposure about prison conditions and we shall continue, because real changes are mandatory.

I close with a patented reminder that "collective unity" and "understanding" must continue, so that we may proceed forth with the unshakeable foundation of Solidarity.

In Revolution and Solidarity,  
Khalid, aka "Bayh!", Maryland

Black & Pink Family,

Hello! My name is Justin Gray. I'm a 36-year-old gay man. I'm in a Federal Prison in Florida. I'm from New Mexico, born and raised. I came out when I was around 12 but my family was not having a gay member. I grew up in a town where being gay was seen as a mental disorder. I'm a ranch boy, brew up on 355 acres. My parents owned a cattle ranch in New Mexico. Life on a ranch is hard work. But I love to work and be outside. When people first look at me and talk to me they think I'm straight and ask me if I'm married with kids. I'm a white country boy who's 6'6" and 190 lbs. With hazel eyes and dark red hair. I have a lot of tattoos.

Now that I have told you some about who I am and where I'm from I can tell you about what I've gone through being gay in prison. Since I've been at this FCI Federal Prison I've had to deal with the officers and inmates who deem me sick. The officers target two kinds of people 1) Gays and 2) Sex Offenders. Here we can order photos of both men and women through photo companies. I had some photos of men in my locker. The Officer took them and then took pictures of my family but only the ones with my male cousins and other males. I was called to psychology where a woman told me I could not have them. And for the family pictures she is worried someone would steal them. She would be giving them to property to mail out. Then she lost all my photos when she had set the envelope down on her desk and another inmate picked up the envelope at one point that day. I was like are you f\*\*king kidding me. I'm still fighting with them. I will not give up. Plus I still order my sexy guy photos. And when I can, I get Gay Magazines like GT (Gay Times), The Advocate, Out, and Wing. But the cost of these magazines is a lot to be prepared to pay. I've been lucky that there's someone here who buys these mags and will share.

I've been getting the Black and Pink paper for 3 or 4 months now and I look forward to them every month. I enjoy reading the letters from Family. I've noticed that most of them are from DOC's not BOP's. But Prisons are prisons—one's state and one's federal.

I plan on being a member of Black & Pink for life. I have 18 more years here in Federal prison before I can help from the outside. But until then I'll share through my letters and try to support you through letters when I can.

Mia of California and everyone else, keep your head held high. We all have bad days and sometimes we have really bad days, but just remember you're not alone. We are all here together. Until next time, be safe. To the

Black & Pink staff, thank you very much.

With much respect always,  
Justin, Florida

Dear Black and Pink,

I have been receiving your newspaper since March of 2014. I see there are a lot of transwomen who write from California Prisons. The stories of abuse by inmates and staff seem to never end. The prison I am at in California is well known for transwomen since the early 80's. Of which at the time there was around 200 or so of us. At the present this prison has around 10. With such a low number we are truly outcasts in every way here.

My message is simple to the California transwomen in prison. We need to put focus on our respect and medical needs before we can attempt to tackle issues like sex changes, make-up, and female clothes. We have the right to be respected and to receive proper medical treatment. I know the 602 process is difficult. But in order to make a change, the paperwork is the proper way to begin. If staff is disrespecting you and you feel you aren't receiving the medical care you should have, then do a 602. And follow it to the dictation. The only way to change, is all of the transwomen STAND TOGETHER with the 602's. And then flood the courts with the lawsuits. Contact members of the assembly, the newspapers, and news stations. We can only achieve greatness if we set an example. There are enough transwomen in California prisons to make a difference and changes. SO get busy. I love you all.

Own where you are in life!  
Lisa, California

## STRUGGLING FOR RIGHTS

### WHY QUEERS SHOULD CARE ABOUT SEX OFFENDERS

"So, how are the pedophiles doing?"

As a group psychotherapist for convicted sex offenders on parole and probation who also operates a private practice for queer people, I am bombarded with comments and questions from friends and family:

"Aren't you scared?" "I could never do that." "What's it like to talk to all those child molesters?"

At first I was surprised to hear some of my most educated, liberal friends ask questions that were, to me, biased and misinformed. I had assumed that, as queers and allies, my friends would have a greater sensitivity to the persecution sex offenders face in American society. I have since come to realize that queer folk are not more prone to find empathy for this population.

I often find myself feeling defensive, and almost guilty, in the line of such questioning. "So... why are you interested in them?" they ask, a look of distaste on their faces.

Here's the thing: I don't consider "them" my bizarre, special interest. All queer people are invested in the plight of sex offenders, whether they like it or not.

### DEVIANC AND THE DANGERS OF OTHERING

Although I studied many subjects in college, my interest especially aligned with the radical thinking of my queer theories coursework. Queer theory obliterates the idea of good and bad sex and what should and should not be deemed deviant. As such, my courses covered gay history, the timeline of the gay rights movements, queer theory, and the burgeoning transgender studies, as well as genderqueers, kink, sexual fluidity, and asexuality.

But there was a strange silence in these class discussions as well. As my education continued, I began thinking about other people who transgressed cultural norms of sexuality, other people whose sexual desires had been labeled deviant -- people who even queer theory courses weren't talking about. There might be no group more maligned, marginalized, and disconcerting as modern-day America's "sex offenders."

In treatment, lawmaking, and cultural discourse, sex offenders are referred to as participating in deviant sexual behavior, having deviant sexual fantasies, and being inherently "deviant" themselves. From one angle, this is true; all sex offenders have deviated from the boundaries of one or more laws regarding sex or the body.

But sociologist Joel Best describes the problematic nature of how the term "deviance" is used in our culture. In his book Deviance, he emphasizes that "a deviant label was simply a sign that some groups with power had singled out some acts or conditions for disapproval." The term means that, according to the rules of a powerful few, something is inherently wrong with you if you are not like everybody else. In other words, deviance becomes a viral social construct that serves as a moral imperative to dictate and intimidate people into behaving.

Queer theory has well documented how those in power have employed the terminology of deviance to oppress queers. In recent history, society has labeled gays, lesbians, and transgender folk as

*Cont on Page 15*

The member survey begins by asking a bit about you. ***PLEASE ONLY FILL OUT THIS IMPORTANT SURVEY ONE TIME.***

1. Your age: \_\_\_\_\_ years old

2. Your race/ethnicity:

- ▽ 2a. Black/African American/Afro-Caribbean
- ▽ 2b. Latin@/Hispanic
- ▽ 2c. White (non-hispanic)
- ▽ 2d. East Asian
- ▽ 2e. Southeast Asian
- ▽ 2f. South Asian
- ▽ 2g. Middle Eastern/Arab
- ▽ 2h. American Indian/Indigenous/First Nations/Native American
- ▽ 2i. Mixed Race
- ▽ 2j. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ▽ 2k. Inuit/Native Alaskan
- ▽ 2l. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. What languages do you speak? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Your gender-sex (below are some examples)

- ▽ 4a. Trans woman (assigned Male when born, now a Woman)
- ▽ 4b. Trans man (assigned Female when born, now a Man)
- ▽ 4c. Woman, or Cisgender Woman (assigned Female when born, now a Woman)
- ▽ 4d. Man, or Cisgender Man (assigned Male when born, now a Man)
- ▽ 4e. Genderqueer / Gender fluid
- ▽ 4f. Two Spirit (this identity only applies to people who identify as Indigenous / Native American / American Indian)
- ▽ 4g. Intersex
- ▽ 4h. Any other description of your gender? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Your sexuality

- ▽ 5a. Lesbian
- ▽ 5b. Gay
- ▽ 5c. Homosexual
- ▽ 5d. Bisexual
- ▽ 5e. Queer
- ▽ 5f. Same-Gender Loving
- ▽ 5g. Two Spirit (this identity only applies to people who identify as Indigenous / Native American / American Indian)
- ▽ 5h. Asexual
- ▽ 5i. Any other description of your sexuality? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you have a disability? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

6a. What kind of disability (please list all)? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you have children? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

7a. If yes, do you ever get visits or phone calls from them? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

8. Did you complete this kind of school? Mark X for "Inside" an institution like prison or juvenile detention, or "Outside" in the free world?

- ▽ 8a. Elementary School: \_\_\_\_\_ "inside" an institution like prison or juvenile detention, \_\_\_\_\_ "outside" in the free world
- ▽ 8b. Middle School: \_\_\_\_\_ "inside" an institution like prison or juvenile detention, \_\_\_\_\_ "outside" in the free world
- ▽ 8c. High School: \_\_\_\_\_ "inside" an institution like prison or juvenile detention, \_\_\_\_\_ "outside" in the free world
- ▽ 8d. GED: \_\_\_\_\_ "inside" an institution like prison or juvenile detention, \_\_\_\_\_ "outside" in the free world
- ▽ 8e. Some college credit, no degree: \_\_\_\_\_ "inside" an institution like prison or juvenile detention, \_\_\_\_\_ "outside" in the free world
- ▽ 8f. Trade/technical/vocational training: \_\_\_\_\_ "inside" an institution like prison or juvenile detention, \_\_\_\_\_ "outside" in the free world
- ▽ 8g. 2 year college (Associate degree): \_\_\_\_\_ "inside" an institution like prison or juvenile detention, \_\_\_\_\_ "outside" in the free world
- ▽ 8h. 4 year college (Bachelor's degree): \_\_\_\_\_ "inside" an institution like prison or juvenile detention, \_\_\_\_\_ "outside" in the free world
- ▽ 8i. Graduate degree: \_\_\_\_\_ "inside" an institution like prison or juvenile detention, \_\_\_\_\_ "outside" in the free world

9. Have you ever served in any branch of the armed forces of the United States? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

9a. If yes, which branch? \_\_\_\_\_

10. What was your housing situation before you were incarcerated most recently? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Were you employed before you were incarcerated most recently? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

12. Have you ever traded sex for money, housing, food, drugs, protection or services when not incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

13. Have you ever sold drugs for money? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

14. Have you ever stolen money or anything else you needed? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

15. How much money did you make in a year before you were incarcerated most recently? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

16. Growing up, about how much money did the people who raised you make each year? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

17. How old were you when you were first arrested? \_\_\_\_\_ years old

18. How old were you when you were first incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_ years old

19. How many times have you been incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_ times

#### Pre-Trial and Court Questions (based on your current sentence)

20. Were you held in jail prior to your conviction because you could not afford bail? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

20a. If yes, how long were you held in jail prior to your sentencing? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months \_\_\_\_\_ days

21. Were you denied bail prior to your conviction? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

21a. If yes, how long were you held in jail prior to your sentencing? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months \_\_\_\_\_ days

22. Did you have a private attorney? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

23. Did you have an attorney appointed for you? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

24. Did your attorney know about your gender/sexual identity? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

25. Did you feel discriminated against by your attorney? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

26. Did you feel discriminated against by the prosecution? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

27. Did you feel discriminated against by the judge? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

28. Did you take a plea agreement? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

28a. If yes, what were some of the reasons that you took the plea agreement? \_\_\_\_\_

29. Did you have a jury trial? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

29a. If yes, did you feel discriminated against by the jury? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

30. What were you convicted of (remember this is anonymous, and we will not judge you based on your conviction)? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions for survey (second printing of same survey)

- Please mark **one or more** ▽ which make sense for you.
- Please put an X for “  X   Yes,        No” type questions
- Please put **one or more X** for questions like:  
“  X   Emotional,        Physical,   X   Sexual”
- Please fill in the blank for other types like:  
“  35   years old” or “\$ 10,000            ”
- Please write in answers to more detailed questions. You can use more paper if you are putting the survey in an envelope, please just write the question number ☺



Cute break!

They say  
"Hi!"

## Incarceration Questions (based on your current sentence)

31. How long is your current sentence?

▽ 31a. Release after (Example: 10 years 6 months): \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

▽ 31b. Life sentence

▽ 31c. Life without parole

▽ 31d. Death Sentence

32. How long have you done on this sentence? (Example: 3 years 4 months) \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

33. What type of facility are you currently housed in? \_\_\_\_\_ Federal, \_\_\_\_\_ State, \_\_\_\_\_ County, \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital

34. What level facility are you currently housed in? \_\_\_\_\_ Pre-Release, \_\_\_\_\_ Minimum, \_\_\_\_\_ Medium, \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum, \_\_\_\_\_ Super Max

35. Which state are you incarcerated in now?

36. Have you ever been in solitary confinement? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

Please only answer questions 37-41 if you have ever been in solitary confinement. Otherwise, skip to question 42. Thank you!

37. Are you currently in solitary confinement? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

38. How many times have you been in solitary confinement? \_\_\_\_\_ times

39. Added together, what is the total amount of time you have spent in solitary confinement? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months \_\_\_\_\_ days

40. Have you ever been placed in solitary confinement for your own safety, or as a protective measure by the prison, *against your will*? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

41. Have you ever been placed in solitary confinement for your own safety *by your own request*? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

41a. If yes, what were some of the reasons? \_\_\_\_\_

## Parole Questions

42. Do you have the option for parole with your current sentence? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

42a. Given the opportunity, would you go on parole? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

42b. If yes, when do you go up for your next parole hearing? \_\_\_\_\_

43. Have you ever been granted parole during a previous sentence? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

44. Have you ever been denied parole? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

45. How do you feel the parole board treated you? \_\_\_\_\_

45a. Do you believe you were discriminated against by the parole board? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

46. Have you ever been returned to prison for a parole violation? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

This is a great time to take a break, stretch your fingers, and rest. The next bunch of questions start asking about your identity and experiences with harm.

## Sexuality

47. Did you identify as LGBTQ before your incarceration? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

48. Have you felt emotional pain from hiding your sexuality? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

49. Do any other prisoners know what your sexuality is? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

49a. If yes, how did they respond? (It is okay if different people had different reactions) \_\_\_\_\_

50. Do prison staff know about your sexuality? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

50a. If yes, how did they respond? (It is okay if different people had different reactions) \_\_\_\_\_

51. If you have been sexually active in prison, have you had conversations while in prison with your sexual partners about:

\_\_\_\_\_ Safer sex, \_\_\_\_\_ Sexually transmitted infections, \_\_\_\_\_ HIV/AIDS, \_\_\_\_\_ None of these topics, \_\_\_\_\_ I have not been sexually active in prison

52. Have you ever been disciplined for consensual sexual activity? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

52a. If yes, which then occurred?: \_\_\_\_\_ Disciplinary ticket (shot), \_\_\_\_\_ Loss of privileges (like phone calls), \_\_\_\_\_ Placed in solitary confinement, Other: \_\_\_\_\_

53. Have you ever used condoms or other barriers to help stop the transmission of Sexually Transmitted Infections while in prison? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

54. Does your prison offer access to condoms or other safer sex items? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

55. Have you ever traded sex with other prisoners for money/canteen/commissary during your incarceration? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

56. Have you ever traded sex with other prisoners for personal protection? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

Questions 57-69 are about Gender Identity.

*Please answer only if you identify as transgender, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, two spirit, or another gender that is not cisman or ciswoman*

## Gender Identity

57. Have you felt emotional pain from hiding your gender identity? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

58. Do any other prisoners know what your gender identity is? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

58a. If yes, how did they respond? (It is okay if different people had different reactions) \_\_\_\_\_

59. Do prison staff know about your sexuality? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

59a. If yes, how did they respond? (It is okay if different people had different reactions) \_\_\_\_\_

60. Do you have a diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

61. Have you ever been denied a diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

62. Before you were incarcerated, did you take hormone replacement therapy to support your gender expression?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes prescribed by a doctor, \_\_\_\_\_ Yes from the street, \_\_\_\_\_ No

63. Do you take prescribed hormone replacement therapy to support your gender expression now? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

64. Have you ever been denied hormone replacement therapy you requested? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

65. Have you been given access to gender confirming (AKA sex reassignment) surgeries? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

66. Have you been denied access to gender confirming (AKA sex reassignment) surgery you requested? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

67. Do you know your prison's policy about medical services for transgender prisoners? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

67a. If yes, what is your understanding of the policy? \_\_\_\_\_



68. Are you permitted access to underwear and cosmetic needs that match your gender? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

69. Is there a special canteen available for transgender prisoners? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

69a. If yes, does one have to have a medical diagnosis to access products in this canteen? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

Sometimes even reading questions about violence can bring up things inside your mind. These thoughts can make you sad, angry, feel like you are back in the situation when harm happened. Remember to take breaks if you need them. Remember that you are not alone. One of the reasons we ask these questions is to show that violence against LGBTQ prisoners is far too common. Know that you are cared for and not forgotten.

## Discrimination, harassment, physical and sexual violence by prison staff

70. Have you experienced discrimination by prison staff? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

71. Have you experienced name calling or verbal harassment by a prison staff person? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

72. Have you ever been physically assaulted (hit, punched, kicked, beaten, etc) by a prison staff person? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

73. Approximately how many times have you been strip searched during your incarceration? \_\_\_\_\_ times

74. Have you ever been subjected to a cavity search (inserting fingers inside anus and/or vagina)? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

75. Have you ever had unwanted touching by a prison staff person? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

76. Have you ever been sexually assaulted or raped by a prison staff person? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

77. Would you be willing to share any details of your experience(s) of unwanted touching or sexual assault by a prison staff person? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No  
If yes, please describe (feel free to use another page if you are sending this in an envelope): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

78. Have you ever been promised anything in exchange for sexual favors from prison staff? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

79. Have prison staff ever intentionally placed you where you would be at high risk of being sexually assaulted by another prisoner? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No  
Discrimination, harrassment, physical and sexual violence by another prisoner

80. Have you experienced discrimination by another prisoner? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

81. Have you experienced name calling or verbal harassment by another prisoner? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

82. Have you ever been physically assaulted (hit, punched, kicked, beaten, etc) by another prisoner? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

83. Have you ever had unwanted touching by another prisoner? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

84. Have you ever been sexually assaulted or raped by another prisoner? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

85. Would you be willing to share any details of your experience(s) of unwanted touching or sexual assault by another prisoner? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No  
If yes, please describe (feel free to use another page if you are sending this in an envelope): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Relationships

86. Have you ever been in a romantic relationship while in prison? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

87. Have you ever been in love with another prisoner? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

88. How did you make the relationship work? What were some of the successes? What were some of the challenges? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

89. Are you now or have you ever been in an abusive relationship while in prison? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

89a. If yes, what kinds of abuse were present in your relationship? Abuse occurs when there is control by one person over another person:

\_\_\_\_\_ Emotional, \_\_\_\_\_ Physical, \_\_\_\_\_ Sexual, \_\_\_\_\_ Financial, \_\_\_\_\_ Cultural

90. If you have gotten out of an abusive relationship while in prison, in the past, how did you do so? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

91. Do you know of resources available for prisoners who are in abusive relationships during their incarceration? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

91a. If yes, what are they? \_\_\_\_\_

This is a great time to take another break. Stretch your body, stretch your fingers. Take a rest.

### Drug Use

92. Have you ever struggled with drug/alcohol addiction? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

93. Which drugs or alcohol have you used? \_\_\_\_\_

94. Have you used while incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

95. Are there drug treatment programs available to you? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

### Prison Programs

96. Have you ever taken part in a program offered by the prison? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

96a. If yes, which programs have you taken part in? \_\_\_\_\_ Parenting, \_\_\_\_\_ Recovery, \_\_\_\_\_ Violence Prevention, \_\_\_\_\_ Music,  
\_\_\_\_\_ Art, \_\_\_\_\_ Job Training, \_\_\_\_\_ GED/High School Diploma, \_\_\_\_\_ College Classes, \_\_\_\_\_ Other programs

97. Have you ever been denied access to a program because of being LGBTQ? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

98. Does the institution you're in provide access to any books? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

98a. If yes, can you access these kinds of books? \_\_\_\_\_ Legal books, \_\_\_\_\_ Computer databases about legal information, \_\_\_\_\_ LGBTQ books

99. What types of books do you read (either from the institution or mailed to you)? \_\_\_\_\_

### Healthcare

100. How many times per year do you see a doctor?

101. Do you have to pay a fee to see a doctor? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

101a. If yes, how much are the fees you have to pay to see a doctor? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

101b. If yes, has the fee ever prevented you from accessing medical care? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

102. Does the medical staff know that you are LGBTQ? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

103. Have you ever been denied medical care you requested? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

104. How does the medical staff treat you?

\_\_\_\_\_ Respectfully, \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat respectfully, \_\_\_\_\_ Neutral, \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat disrespectfully, \_\_\_\_\_ Disrespectfully

### HIV/AIDS

105. Have you ever been tested for HIV/AIDS? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

106. Have you ever received education about HIV/AIDS in prison? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

107. Have you been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

108. Were you diagnosed before your incarceration? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

109. If you are living with HIV/AIDS, are you provided with medication and doctor's visits for HIV/AIDS? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

110. Have you ever been put in solitary confinement because of your HIV/AIDS status? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

111. If you are living with HIV/AIDS, can you share some about your experience with harassment, stigma, support, or other interactions with prisoners and prison staff? Please share as much or as little as you would like \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Hepatitis C

112. Have you been diagnosed with Hepatitis C? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

113. Were you diagnosed before your incarceration? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

114. Are you provided appropriate care for Hepatitis C (medication)? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

### Mental Illness

115. Have you been diagnosed with any mental illness? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No

115a. If yes, do you receive any therapy? \_\_\_\_\_ Individual therapy, \_\_\_\_\_ Group therapy, \_\_\_\_\_ No, I do not receive therapy

116. How do your therapist(s) treat you?

\_\_\_\_\_ Respectfully, \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat respectfully, \_\_\_\_\_ Neutral, \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat disrespectfully, \_\_\_\_\_ Disrespectfully



Cont from Page 15 abnormal, problematic, and threatening. Gay men, for instance, threatened to lure, groom, and convert children into the homosexual lifestyle; they were not to be trusted or validated. At one point, they were considered mentally ill and criminal. Sex between consenting adult males was illegal and morally reprehensible and served to mandate a gay man to a mental hospital or jail cell. Gay men and trans people socially congregating in bars, such as at Stonewall, was a valid reason for police to raid, frisk, and arrest mass numbers of them.

This is an important part of history that needs to be retold, to serve as a reminder of what happens when authorities dictate the lives and behaviors of “deviant” populations. In fact, this history is still among us; trans, gay, and queer people are currently arrested and incarcerated at a rate disproportionate to the general population. In this infographic, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project outlines how trans and gender-nonconforming people are at a high risk of incarceration, police harassment, and violence. Despite the existence of these contemporary systems of inequality, I worry that in the era of gay marriage, pinkwashing, and assimilatory LGBT politics, we queers may be forgetting the dangers of othering.

Because there's no use mincing words here: The same methods historically used by the government to imprison and pathologize homosexuality and gender variation are being used today to justify the extreme marginalization, lifetime institutionalization, and oppression of people who have violated sex laws. Sex offenders are the new queers.

#### WHO SEX OFFENDERS ARE AND WHAT WE ARE DOING TO THEM

There is a widespread assumption that all sex offenders are child molesters, pedophiles, and violent rapists. This is not true. A large spectrum of acts are considered sex offenses. These include public nudity, urinating in public, public masturbation, peeping, photographing or videotaping without consent, consensual sex with a 17-year-old, sexting, and downloading unlawful pornography; many of these acts will put the offender on the public registry. There is no single “type” of sex offender; they can be from any walk of life, and any race, class, gender, or sexuality. They are fathers, mothers, brothers, teachers, and friends.

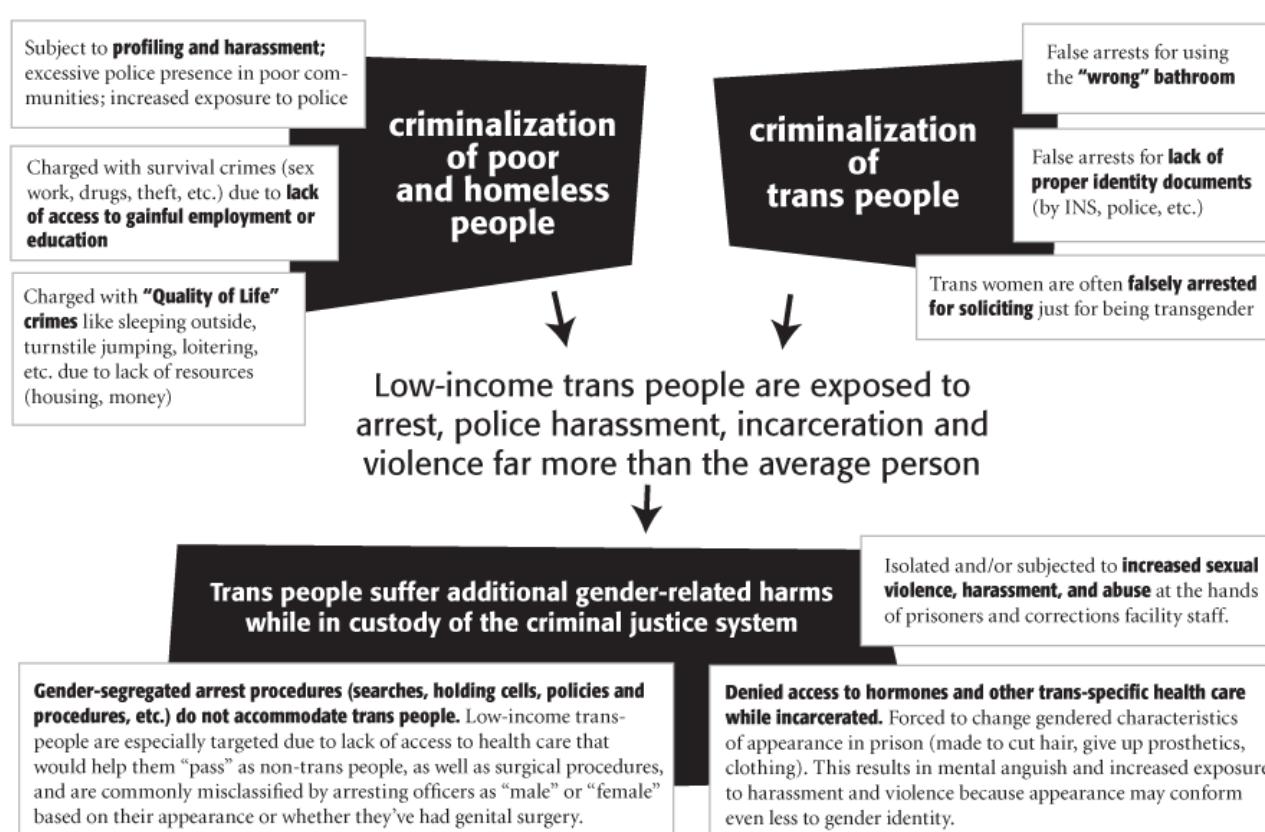
Let me be clear: I am not advocating for the legitimization of these acts as appropriate. A forceful, coercive, violent sexual assault is not to be tolerated. But I am saying that the public perception of the sex offender, and of the laws violated to become a sex offender, is inaccurate.

It is also important to explain the ramifications of this label. In California, many sex offenders must be publicly profiled for life on the online registry created as a result of Megan's Law in 2004. In 2006, Jessica's Law increased the penalties for sex offenders, created a residency restriction of 2,000 feet from parks and schools, and mandated GPS tracking for felony offenders. Chelsea's Law further tightened the restrictions and increased monitoring.

The Supreme Court recently upheld a law that allows for the indefinite civil commitment of those sex offenders deemed unfit to reenter society. This means that they are placed in a forensic mental hospital for the rest of their lives, or until it is decided that they have been appropriately rehabilitated. Very few of these people have been released from civil commitment.

#### SYSTEMS OF INEQUALITY: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

This diagram illustrates how overpolicing and profiling of low income people and of trans and gender non-conforming people intersect, producing a far higher risk than average of imprisonment, police harassment, and violence for low income trans people.



As a treatment provider for sex offenders, I have seen the effects of these punishments firsthand. One of the main issues faced is homelessness. According to the California Sex Offender Management Board, the number of homeless registrants rose from 88 to 6,012 in the five years after Jessica's Law was enacted. It is almost impossible to find steady work as a felon, and especially difficult if you are listed on the public registry, photo and all. The sex offenders that I see have been socially ostracized, often by family and friends, and suffer from mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder as a result. GPS units, parole visits, and yearly registration serve as constant reminders of their crimes, their victims, and their newfound labels as deviants with no hope of recovery.

However, it is a misconception that the majority of sex offenders reoffend, as the actual number is around 2 to 5 percent for recidivism from a sex crime. A 2008 study by the California Sex Offender Management Board reports 3.38 percent of sex offenders released in 1997 and 1998 were convicted of a new sex offense in the decade after release. A far larger number reenter the prison system as a result of parole violations, an understandable sum considering the severity and rigidity of parole terms.

The sex offender treatment models currently in use are mostly based in cognitive behavioral therapy, helping offenders reevaluate their thoughts and beliefs and make healthier decisions to reduce risk of reoffense. Despite this good-natured approach, these treatment models still speak of sexual deviance. One manual recommends ammonia aversion therapy, in which the offender repeatedly inhales ammonia while reciting his most “deviant” sexual fantasies. The intended goal — to rid the offender of whatever sexual desire is deemed unhealthy or deviant by the treatment provider — echoes gay conversion therapy methods. If queer theory allows for one's right to a diversity of sexual desire, shouldn't we question the “reprogramming” of an offender's sexual feelings?

The main problem with the ammonia aversion therapy is that it presupposes that the sexual feelings motivate and explain the crime. It assumes that if you rid the sexual desire, then you rid the possibility of criminal sexual activity; sexual feelings are understood as uncontrollable dictators of sexual activity. If a man has sexual feelings for children, it is assumed that he is at a high risk of nonconsensual contact with a child. As such, sex offender treatment emphasizes sexual desire as a motivator for a sex crime over other factors, such as low impulse control, a history of trauma, lack of social support, and emotional instability. “Deviant” sexual desire is thereby equated with criminal sexual activity. This is a dangerous stance, as it heightens paranoia and fear in our culture's understanding of all abnormal sexual feeling, thought, fantasy, belief, or identity.

#### WHY QUEERS SHOULD CARE

Any queer person should feel a pang of familiarity reading about the vilification of people based on sexual desire. At one point, the idea of the predatory, untamable homosexual was a widely held belief; the very fact that a man would think of desiring another man was reason enough to criminalize his existence. Whether growing up in the early 20th century or the early 21st century, a cultural condemnation of queer desire, affect, and identity is consistently reaffirmed.

While mainstream cultural perception of queer people is shifting, it affirms monogamous sex between married, consenting gay and lesbian adults. Gender variation and other forms of sexual desire and behavior, including heterosexual female desire outside of monogamy, still face condemnation. If queerness is teetering on the edge of what culture says is deviant, othered, or wrong, an alliance across marginalized communities is vital for acquisition and maintenance of civil liberties for all.

I need to emphasize that many sex offenders are queer themselves. Many gay men, lesbians, and trans women are labeled sex offenders as a result of survival sex, prostitution, cruising, and public sex. Many queer people don't realize the legal risks associated with a number of cultural behaviors that have become somewhat normalized, such as public cruising.

A recent example of criminalizing queer relationships is the case of Kaitlyn Hunt. Kaitlyn is a now-18-year-old girl who is being charged with two counts of lewd and lascivious battery of a child resulting from an allegedly consensual relationship with her 15-year-old girlfriend. The Internet has seen a groundswell of support for Kaitlyn, finding her persecution homophobic, unfair, and misguided. This reaction is certainly warranted and points to a larger issue with age-of-consent legislation. *Cont on page 16* *Cont*

*from page 15*This type of legal action takes place all the time, in all types of communities, resulting in new sex offenders to label, monitor, and vilify. The case of Kaitlyn Hunt should open our eyes to the ways in which sex laws are abused in our country — not just for queers but for everyone.

The people we have labeled sex offenders are a multifarious group, with a wide spectrum of sexual desires. Empathy is needed for the group as a whole to ensure that they do not continue to be the cultural pariahs that we queers, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender folk once were, and arguably still are. If we allow for the continuation of inhumane imprisonment based on what dominant culture and the government deem “bad sex,” we put ourselves at risk of further condemnation.

Clearly this is a tricky, complex, and imperfect dialogue to be holding. But I fear that if we queers do not engage in conversations about moral gray areas and uncomfortable topics, we put ourselves at risk and lose the fervor, innovation, and critical thinking that once defined queerness.

*This essay was originally published on The Huffington Post by Andrew Extein republished on The Center for Sexual Justice*

## ANTI-GAY LAWS DRIVE SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER RATES OF POVERTY FOR LGBT PEOPLE

Landmark report exposes how legal failures create financial penalties for LGBT Americans

Washington, D.C. — A landmark report released today paints a stark picture of the added financial burdens that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, or LGBT, Americans face because of anti-LGBT laws at the national, state, and local levels. According to the report, these laws contribute to significantly higher rates of poverty among LGBT Americans and create unfair financial penalties in the form of higher taxes, reduced wages and Social Security income, increased health care costs, and more.

The momentum of recent court rulings overturning marriage bans across the country has created the impression that LGBT Americans are on the cusp of achieving full equality from coast to coast. But the new report, “Paying an Unfair Price: The Financial Penalty for Being LGBT in America,” documents how inequitable laws harm the economic well-being of LGBT people in three key ways:

- By enabling legal discrimination in jobs, housing, credit, and other areas
- By failing to recognize LGBT families, both in general and across a range of programs and laws designed to help American families
- By creating barriers to safe and affordable education for LGBT students and the children of LGBT parents

“Paying an Unfair Price” was co-authored by the Movement Advancement Project, or MAP, and the Center for American Progress, in partnership with Center for Community Change, Center for Popular Democracy, National Association of Social Workers, and the National Education Association.

“Unfair laws deliver a one-two punch. They both drive poverty within the LGBT community and then hit people when they are down,” said Ineke Mushovic, Executive Director of MAP. “While families with means might be able to withstand the costs of extra taxation or the unfair denial of Social Security benefits, for a family already struggling, these financial penalties can mean the difference between getting by and getting evicted. Anti-LGBT laws do the most harm to the most vulnerable in the LGBT community, including those who are barely making ends meet, families with children, older adults, and people of color.”

The report documents the often-devastating consequences when the law fails LGBT families. For example, children raised by same-sex parents are almost twice as likely to be poor as children raised by married opposite-sex parents. Additionally, 15 percent of transgender workers have incomes of less than \$10,000 per year; among the population as a whole, the comparable figure is just 4 percent. To demonstrate the connection between anti-LGBT laws and the finances of LGBT Americans and their families, the report outlines how LGBT people living in states with low levels of equality are more likely to be poor, both compared to their non-LGBT neighbors, and compared to their LGBT counterparts in states with high levels of equality.

Discriminatory laws create a devastating cycle of poverty  
How do inequitable laws contribute to higher rates of poverty for LGBT people? The report documents how LGBT people in the United States face clear financial penalties because of three primary failures in the law.

Lack of protection from discrimination means that LGBT people can be fired, denied housing and credit, and refused medically necessary health care simply because they are LGBT. The financial penalty: LGBT people can struggle to find work, make less on the job, and have higher housing and medical costs

than their non-LGBT peers. Refusal to recognize LGBT families means that LGBT families are denied many of the same benefits afforded to non-LGBT families when it comes to health insurance, taxes, vital safety-net programs, and retirement planning. The financial penalty: LGBT families pay more for health insurance, taxes, and legal assistance and may be unable to access essential protections for their families in times of crisis.

Failure to adequately protect LGBT students means that LGBT people and their families often face a hostile, unsafe, and unwelcoming environment in local schools, as well as discrimination in accessing financial aid and other support. The financial penalty: LGBT youth are more likely to perform poorly in school and to face challenges pursuing postsecondary educational opportunities, as can youth with LGBT parents. This, in turn, can reduce their earnings over time, as well as their chances of having successful jobs and careers.

“Imagine losing your job or your home simply because of who you are or who you love. Imagine having to choose between paying the rent and finding legal help so you can establish parenting rights for the child you have been raising from birth,” said Laura E. Durso, Director LGBT Progress at the Center for American Progress. “These are just a couple of the added costs that are harming the economic security of LGBT people across the country. It is unfair and un-American that LGBT people are penalized because of who they are, and it has real and profound effects on their ability to stay out of poverty and provide for their families.”

“Paying an Unfair Price” offers broad recommendations to help strengthen economic security for LGBT Americans. Recommendations include:  
Instituting basic nondiscrimination protections at the federal and state level  
Allowing same-sex couples to marry in all states  
Allowing LGBT parents to form legal ties with the children they are raising  
Protecting students from discrimination and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity

“At a time when so many American families are struggling to make ends meet, the report’s findings point to an even bleaker reality for those who are both LGBT and people of color,” said Connie Razza, Director of Strategic Research at the Center for Popular Democracy. “Unchecked employment discrimination and laws that needlessly increase the costs of health care, housing, and child care are doing profound harm to our economic strength as a nation. This report offers real-life policy solutions that, if implemented, would protect some of our most vulnerable individuals and families.”

“Reducing the unfair financial penalties that LGBT people face in this country because they are LGBT is not that complicated. It is a simple matter of treating LGBT Americans equally under the law; for example, extending the freedom to marry, including LGBT students in safe schools laws, and ending the exclusion of LGBT people from laws meant to protect families when a parent dies or becomes disabled,” said Deepak Bhargava, executive director of the Center for Community Change.

*Authored in part by the Center for American Progress. Originally published on the Center for American Progress 30 September 2014*

## HERE'S WHAT MARRIAGE EQUALITY LOOKS LIKE AFTER THE SUPREME COURT'S ACTION TODAY

This map shows exactly what happened with the Supreme Court’s decision Monday to not hear the pending marriage equality cases.

There were seven pending suits in five states: Virginia, Indiana, Wisconsin, Oklahoma, and Utah. Marriage equality is arriving more or less immediately in those states. There are complications about when the Circuit Courts issue their mandates, but the states’ attorney generals and clerks — like in Virginia, for example — are already planning to issue licenses to same-sex couples before the day is over. This brings the total of marriage equality states to 24, plus the District of Columbia. [...]

What’s perhaps most important to note is that most of the eleven states affected by the Supreme Court’s actions today do not have state-wide nondiscrimination protections based on sexual orientation. In fact, only Colorado and Wisconsin do. This means that even though same-sex couples will soon be able to legally marry in those nine other states, they can also be legally fired, denied housing, or refused service simply for doing so. Previously, Pennsylvania was the only state to have the distinction of marriage equality but no protections, and there have already been numerous cases of legal anti-gay discrimination taking place as a result.

*By Zack Ford. Originally published on Think Progress by 6 October 2014*

## MARRIAGE WILL NEVER SET US FREE

THE BIG PROBLEMS	THE OFFICIAL LESBIAN & GAY SOLUTIONS	OTHER QUEER POLITICAL APPROACHES
Queer and trans people, poor people, people of color, and immigrants have minimal access to quality health care	Legalize same-sex marriage to allow people with health benefits from their jobs to share with same-sex partners	Medicaid/Medicare activism; fight for universal healthcare; fight for transgender health benefits; protest deadly medical neglect of people in state custody
Unfair and punitive immigration system	Legalize same-sex marriage to allow same-sex international couples to apply for legal residency for the non-U.S. citizen spouse	Oppose the use of immigration policy to criminalize people of color, exploit workers, and maintain deadly wealth gap between the U.S. and the global south; support current detainees; engage in local and national campaigns against “Secure Communities” and other federal programs that increase racial profiling and deportation
Queer families are vulnerable to legal intervention and separation from the state and/or non-queer people	Legalize same sex marriage to provide a route to “legalize” families with two parents of the same sex; pass laws banning adoption discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation	Join with other people targeted by family law and the child welfare system (poor families, imprisoned parents, native families, families of color, people with disabilities) to fight for community and family self-determination and the rights of people to keep their kids in their families & communities
Institutions fail to recognize family connections outside of heterosexual marriage in contexts like hospital visitation and inheritance	Legalize same-sex marriage to formally recognize same-sex partners in the eyes of the law	Change policies like hospital visitation to recognize a variety of family structures, not just opposite sex and same sex couples; abolish inheritance and demand radical redistribution of wealth and an end to poverty

Excerpt of Chart from Bassichis, Lee and Spade, Building an Abolitionist Trans & Queer Movement with Everything We've Got, in Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex (eds. Stanley and Smith).



*Image by Stanford Students for Queer Liberation*

### HOW MANY WOMEN ARE IN PRISON FOR DEFENDING THEMSELVES AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Last week, domestic violence was front-page news in America as the video of Baltimore Ravens player Ray Rice beating his partner circulated online. Sunday morning news shows interviewed domestic violence survivors, social workers at domestic violence agencies, and even police chiefs about their departments' policies around domestic violence calls.

But in all this discussion about the realities of domestic violence, one perspective was clearly left out: the people who are imprisoned for defending themselves against abusers. Where are the stories about how the legal system often punishes abuse survivors for defending themselves, usually after the legal system itself failed to ensure their safety?

Many readers already know the name Marissa Alexander, the Florida mother of three who was arrested for firing a warning shot to dissuade her abusive husband from assaulting her. In 2012, Alexander was found guilty of aggravated assault and was given a 20 year sentence. Her sentencing coincided with the shooting of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, drawing wider public attention than she might have received otherwise. People across the country rallied to her defense, organizing fundraisers and teach-ins and bringing media attention to the injustice of her case. Alexander appealed her case and was granted a new trial, which is scheduled to start in December 2014. The prosecutor has said that, this time, she will seek a sixty-year sentence for Alexander if she is convicted again.[...]

We know Marissa Alexander's name, but there are countless other abuse survivors behind prison walls whose names and stories we do not know. We actually do not know how many women are imprisoned for defending themselves against their abusers. No agency or organization seems to keep track of this information. Prison systems do not. Court systems do not. The U.S. Department of Justice has some data on intimate partner violence, but not about

how often this violence is a significant factor in the woman's incarceration. In California, a prison study found that 93 percent of the women who had killed their significant others had been abused by them. That study found that 67 percent of those women reported that they had been attempting to protect themselves or their children when they wound up killing their partner. In New York State, 67 percent of women sent to prison for killing someone close to them were abused by that person. But these are just two specific studies; no governmental agency collects data on how frequently abuse plays a direct role to prison nationwide.

This past Sunday morning, an ABC news segment reported that 70 percent of domestic violence calls do not end in prosecution. That story stressed how many abused people choose not to press charges against their loved ones. Not mentioned, however, is how often systems fail to help survivors when they do seek help. Domestic violence survivors have reported that, time and again, they sought help—from family members, from their communities, from domestic violence agencies and from police. Many times, they found that help was unavailable to them. As we collectively wring our hands about domestic violence, shelters for people seeking help remain grossly underfunded. Passing the Violence Against Women Act (which relies heavily on criminalization and arrest, both problematic for women of color and other marginalized people) required a monumental political effort.

I recently interviewed several domestic violence survivors imprisoned for defending themselves. Each woman reported that she had defended herself only after repeatedly trying to seek help—unsuccessfully. One woman recalled that police would drive by as her boyfriend beat her on the street. Most of the time, they ignored the violence and continued to drive. When she called the police, they arrived and did nothing. The one time police did arrest her boyfriend, it was not for attacking her, but for having illegal drug paraphernalia. He was held overnight, then allowed to return home to continue his abuse.

Another woman told me that she had called the police on several occasions. Each time, officers simply took her boyfriend out of their apartment, talked with him, and then allowed him to return. The beatings and abuse continued. She filed for and received an order of protection, which he repeatedly violated. She tried calling domestic violence hotlines. One told her that, to receive assistance, she would have to go in person to their organization. Another did not return her phone calls.

A third woman was in an even more precarious situation. Because her abuser was a police officer, she felt that she had nowhere to turn for protection. He repeatedly told her, “You can't call the police. I am the police.” When she called a domestic violence hotline, they told her that she was in the worst situation possible; in addition to keeping guns in the house, her husband's profession meant that he could access records to find out where she was even if she did leave. They advised her to start saving money and to keep her important papers in one place in case she ever had to flee.

Why does she stay? Why doesn't she leave? Those questions come up frequently in conversations about domestic violence. *Cont on Page 18*

*Cont from Page 17* They also become key legal questions in self-defense cases. But leaving is often the most dangerous time for people in abusive relationships.

In Sin by Silence, a documentary about survivors incarcerated for defending themselves, sociologist Dr. Elizabeth Leonard explained that a battered woman is 75 percent more at risk of being killed after she leaves. She stays at that increased risk for the next two years. Feeling as if he's losing control, batterers generally increase their level of violence. "Leaving does not stop the violence," states Dr. Leonard, in the film.

Each woman I spoke with told me that it was her life or his. She knew that this last attack was the one in which her loved one was making good on his promise to kill her. "You know that this is the end," one woman told me. "You see it in their eyes that they're going to kill you."

Each woman I spoke with survived that attack. Their abuser did not. But since their stories aren't part of our national discussion on domestic violence, we're not asking how we allow a system that failed them to then re-victimize them when they finally defend themselves.

*Victoria Law is a freelance editor and writer. She frequently writes about intersections of incarceration, gender and resistance. She enjoys reading dystopic fiction to escape the realities of the U.S. prison system. Originally published on Bitch Magazine 16 September 2014*

## **ANSWERS TO YOUR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT RECENTLY-PASSED DRUGS MINUS TWO RETROACTIVITY**

On July 18, 2014, the U.S. Sentencing Commission voted to make the two-level reduction in drug guidelines retroactive so that prisoners serving drug sentences can apply for a sentence reduction. Here are some answers to your frequently asked questions:

### **1. A lawyer sent me some information and said he can help me get a sentence reduction but I have to pay him. How do I know who to trust?**

You do not need to hire a private attorney. The majority of prisoners who will be eligible for reductions will be entitled to legal representation free of charge by Federal Public Defenders or appointed counsel in the district where the prisoner was sentenced. Federal Public Defenders are likely to be appointed for prisoners. They are the best lawyers for the job, as they are federal criminal law experts, have been representing people in seeking and obtaining sentence reductions for many years, and do it free of charge.

It will take some time for lawyers to be appointed, so be patient. And, yes, there will be a few districts where courts may decide not to appoint free lawyers. But they are likely to be very few districts. So, don't run out and hire a lawyer before you know whether you need to. If you are still considering hiring a private attorney, at least first contact the Federal Public Defender in the district in which you were sentenced. They may already be looking into your loved one's case.

### **2. Who does Drugs-Minus-Two retroactivity affect?**

Retroactivity means that certain federal drug prisoners will be able to ask the court to reduce their prison sentence by two guideline levels. Many prisoners who received a sentence under the federal Sentencing Guidelines will be eligible for the reduction. Those excluded will include people serving mandatory minimums and people sentenced under the Career Offender guideline (section 4B1.1 of the guideline manual). It will also exclude a prisoner whose calculated drug guideline was level 12 or lower, and it excludes defendants whose offenses are associated with very large quantities of drugs.

### **3. Who won't be helped by Drugs Minus Two retroactivity?**

Prisoners sentenced for crimes other than a drug offense.

Prisoners serving a mandatory minimum for a drug offense.

Prisoners sentenced under the Career Offender guideline (section 4B1.1 of the guideline manual).

Prisoners convicted of state crimes in state courts (in other words, only federal offenders are eligible).

Prisoners sentenced to a set period of time per an 11(c)(1)(C) plea agreement.

4. Why does Drugs Minus Two retroactivity exclude people sentenced under the Career Offender guideline, section 4B1.1?

Unfortunately, even though one's Career Offender sentence can be based on a drug conviction, a person sentenced under the Career Offender guideline, section 4B1.1, is not sentenced under the drug guideline, section 2D1.1. The retroactive amendment did not impact or make any changes to the Career Offender guideline, only to the drug guideline.

### **5. But, if the drug guidelines are reduced, doesn't that affect my Career Offender status?**

No. One's Career Offender guideline sentence under section 4B1.1, even if triggered by a drug conviction, is not based on the drug guideline, section

2D1.1. One is considered a Career Offender when one has at least two prior felony convictions for a crime of violence or controlled substance offense and the current offense is a drug offense or crime of violence. The length of the Career Offender guideline sentence is calculated based on the statutory maximum for the current offense of conviction. The retroactive amendment does not change the Career Offender guideline, section 4B1.1, or any statutory maximums.

### **6. Why Does Drugs Minus Two retroactivity exclude mandatory minimums?**

Mandatory minimums are set by Congress and cannot be changed by the Sentencing Commission. This includes the mandatory minimum 20-year and life sentences enhanced under 21 U.S.C. section 851, for drug offenders with prior felony drug convictions.

### **7. I was sentenced above the mandatory minimum. Will it interfere with how much time I will have my sentence reduced?**

It could limit how much of the reduction you can receive. For example, if you were sentenced to 63 months for a drug offense with a five-year mandatory minimum and are eligible for a two-level reduction (to 51 months), the five-year mandatory minimum will limit the reduction the judge can order in your case to 3 months, because the mandatory minimum of five years, or 60 months, trumps any guideline reduction.

### **8. I heard some people were going to be excluded because of criminal history or enhancements. Did that happen?**

No, it did not. The Commission decided against excluding prisoners from eligibility for Drugs Minus Two retroactivity based on their criminal history or enhancements in their case, such as for guns or obstruction of justice. Judges will be able to consider every prisoner (aside from people sentenced under the Career Offender guideline, those serving mandatory minimums, and those with the highest and lowest drug quantities) on an individual basis. Judges are required to consider public safety and may deny a reduction if they feel that a prisoner's early release could pose a danger to the community.

### **9. Will I be eligible if I already benefitted from the Safety Valve or because of cooperation?**

Yes. Prisoners are still eligible for retroactivity due to the safety valve or cooperation.

### **10. How does retroactivity work?**

The process begins by filing a motion that requests a sentence reduction under 18 U.S.C. section 3582(c)(2), in the court where the prisoner was sentenced. The court will decide whether to grant retroactivity. These are not full resentencings. The only thing the judge can do is determine if the prisoner should receive a two-level sentence reduction. The judge may not adjust the sentence in other ways. If the prosecutor agrees with a reduction, he or she may join the defendant's attorney in a "consent" motion, or may simply decline to respond to the defense's motion. Sometimes a prosecutor will disagree and oppose a motion or sentence reduction. When that happens, the defendant's attorney will reply to rebut the prosecutor's objections. Then the court decides and issues an order granting or denying the motion.

### **11. How can I apply?**

Generally, prisoners will be given a lawyer to represent them in filing their motions for the sentence reductions. Before you even think about hiring a lawyer or asking your loved ones to do so, check with the Federal Public Defender in the district in which you were sentenced. They can tell you if they are going to be appointed to represent you. But give it some time, as everyone is just getting organized, and no motions can be granted before November 1, 2014.

### **12. When can I apply?**

Judges can start considering motions as early as November 1, 2014. Judges may grant retroactivity as early as November 1, 2014, but no prisoner can be released early before November 1, 2015, a year later. It is also likely that lawyers and the courts will triage motions to ensure that those prisoners eligible for immediate release and release in the first months or year will be considered first.

### **13. I heard that no one can be released before November 1, 2015. That is more than a year away. Is that right and if so, why the long wait?**

Yes, November 1, 2015, is the earliest a prisoner can be released. The Commission gave three reasons for the delay: (1) Over 46,000 people will be eligible for a shorter sentence. Nearly 8,000 will be eligible for release in November 2015. The delay will give the government and counsel time to prepare and judges more time to consider the many motions they will receive and carefully weigh each case. (2) The delay will give the Bureau of Prisons time to give prisoners transition services to help ensure their successful return to the community. (3) The delay will help Probation to secure the staffing needed to help the courts with the motions and then supervise the many prisoners who will be released early.

*Cont from page 19*

#### 14. I will be released before November 1, 2015. Will the reduction also reduce my supervised release time?

If a judge would have granted the two-level reduction but could not because the prisoner was released prior to November 1, 2015, the judge can take that situation into account later if the prisoner moves for early termination of their term of supervised release. Federal law permits a judge to terminate supervised release after one year. A judge considering an early termination request may consider the fact that the former prisoner was entitled to but prevented from getting sentence reduction because she was released before November 1, 2015. That can't be the only factor the judge looks at when deciding whether to end supervised release early. Rather, the court has to consider a variety of factors when deciding if early termination is warranted. But, one of the factors is what term of supervised release would have been appropriate in light of the lower, drug minus two, guideline.

*Originally published on Families Against Mandatory Minimums 22 July 2014*

### WAS JOHN GRISHAM RIGHT? HOW CHILD PORN LAWS FUEL MASS INCARCERATION

Popular author John Grisham made headlines this week for speaking out against harsh sentences for child pornography, citing the recent prosecution of a friend for downloading child porn. His friend was sentenced to three years in prison for downloading pornography that claimed to depict 16-year-old females. Predictably there was an immediate backlash, with people accusing him of sympathizing with dangerous pedophiles and even going so far as to find his views an implicit admission of his own child porn fetish. Disappointingly, Grisham then backtracked within hours and entirely took back his statements. However, the extremely negative public reaction to his statements and the social pressure to conform to popular values only highlight the harsh reality of the deranged era of sex panic that fuels mass incarceration today.

In an interview with The Telegraph, Grisham made some reasonable points, despite some of his phrasing and tone. He pointed out that there are many men incarcerated for downloading child porn who would never abuse or have sexual contact with a child; substance use and compulsive pornography consumption can lead people down a path to downloading child porn when they otherwise might not, often entirely by accident; many people convicted of child porn are accused of downloading porn depicting or representing post-pubescent teenagers; sex offender registries are inflated one-size-fits-all solutions to complex and disparate offenses and issues; mass incarceration is a real problem in the US, with exponential rises in prison populations despite falls in violent crime.

Reporter Peter Foster adds more data to his article on Grisham that backs up his claims:

There are currently some 2.2m people in jail in the US – or more than 750 per 100,000 population – which makes the US by far the heaviest user of prison sentences in the world... Since 2004 average sentences for those who possess – but do not produce – child pornography have nearly doubled in the US, from 54 months in 2004 to 95 months in 2010, according to a 2012 report by the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

We can see that this explosion in sentencing for child pornography possession follows the trend of mass incarceration. With the opposition to the war on drugs increasing in popularity, there is a growing consensus that we need to address the problems of over-incarceration and overcrowded prisons. Despite this cultural trend, the support for increased punitive measures for sex crimes has remained on the upward trajectory that has been around since the 1980s.

This is evident in the reaction to Grisham's comments. He has been almost universally panned and derided for questioning the popular belief that downloading child pornography deserves a punishment of many years in prison plus lifetime registration as a sex offender. Even the usually-progressive Think Progress published an article by Jessica Goldstein that supports such conservative values that have led to increasingly harsh sex crime legislation: fetishizing a false idea of childhood innocence, using pejorative language that perpetuates a concept of deviance that has historically been used to demonize and criminalize queer and trans folk, using the logic of black-and-white thinking to erase any nuance in unique experiences. All of these ways of thinking are what has fueled mass incarceration. Similarly, the war on drugs was waged in the name of children and families that reinforced patriarchal, racist, and classist notions of criminality.

I have written about the devastation of child porn legislation before in an article about Jesse Ryan Loskarn, a Washington chief-of-staff who committed suicide after being arrested for downloading child pornography. Loskarn attributed his offense in part to his own experiences of sexual abuse as a child.

However, the public shame and inevitable criminalization that would surely cause a bleak future of isolation, unemployment, and depression proved too much to bear, and he made the decision to end his life.

These are very concrete and tragic side effects to a cultural consensus to punish child porn and other sex offenses disproportionate to the harm inflicted. My summary of the effects of child porn legislation bear repeating:

So what happens when someone is arrested for possession of child pornography? They feel as if their lives have been ruined, that there is no going back to a normal life, no way out, no hope for understanding or empathy from anyone in their lives. They are immediately fired from their jobs. Human relationships crumble, and families are shattered. They are almost invariably convicted and sent to prison and are often placed in imposed solitary confinement, which may be physically safe but can be psychologically damaging. In prison, child pornography offenders are the lowest on the totem pole, both ostracized and targeted. They are often subjected to abuse from inmates and staff alike and are sometimes even killed. Having a same-sex victim comes with its own baggage and set of biases, as one now becomes a double offender, transgressing social boundaries of age as well as gender.

Once released from prison, child porn offenders are placed on a sex offender registry, many for the rest of their lives. Currently nearly 750,000 people are listed as sex offenders on the public registry. The rules of the registry make it nearly impossible to find work or housing, and this is even harder for those on parole and probation. They are publicly listed on the Internet with a photo, address and description of the offense, which leaves the offenders and their families vulnerable to harassment, violence, and sometimes murder. Recently two registrants were beaten and killed in New Hampshire for being publicly listed as sex offenders. A registrant in South Carolina and his wife were killed by a white supremacist in their homes, once again for being listed on the public registry. Suicide as a consequence of sex offender registries is also common. Last year, in a profoundly tragic situation, a 15-year-old boy in Alabama hanged himself shortly after being arrested for streaking during a high school football game. While there are many factors to suicide, it seems that the school's explicit threat of prison and sex offender status greatly contributed to his death. Sadly, these cases are not rare.

And it doesn't look like things are getting better. Many child porn possessions receive harsher sentencing than for hands-on offenses or violent sexual assault of a child, despite no evidence that such possession correlates to or increases the likelihood of future hands-on offenses. Therapists in California are now required to report to law enforcement any client that admits to having viewed child pornography. Judges are handing out 500-year sentences. Scores of men are getting sentenced to 10 years in prison for sexual assault of an imaginary minor in unethical and unconstitutional undercover sex stings where there is no real minor to be abused. Hundreds of gay men are being entrapped and sent to prison for cruising in public. Law enforcement officers are now photographing teenage boys' erect penises to more effectively prosecute them for consensual sexting with a peer.

If we, as a society, are gearing up to earnestly fight mass incarceration, this must include a long, hard, critical look at the way that we conceptualize and punish sex-related offenses. We can't reduce prison populations if we merely replace drug offenders with sex offenders. Many sex offenses are bad—very bad—and shifting our focus will help implement smart solutions that actually prevent harmful sexual assault. Handing over more scapegoats to the government won't decrease the power of the state to inflict violence. We shouldn't immediately rail against John Grisham and others for questioning how sex offenses are legislated; we should stop, listen, think, and talk to each other about our complicated and visceral feelings and thoughts about sex.

*Originally published by Andrew Extein on The Center for Sexual Justice 16 October 2014*

## OSCAR LÓPEZ RIVERA AND THE CASE FOR PRISON ABOLITION

Can we transform the broad-based support for Oscar López Rivera's release into a movement that rejects the notion of incarceration as a solution to social problems?

May 29, 2014 marked the thirty-third year that Oscar López Rivera has spent imprisoned for his role in the struggle to end the United States' occupation and colonization of Puerto Rico. López Rivera was arrested in 1981 and subsequently sentenced to seventy-five years in prison for "seditious conspiracy" related to his participation in the FALN, a nationalist group responsible for a series of bombings during the 1970s and 1980s. López Rivera served a number of years in control units in USP Marion and ADX Florence, where he was subjected to extreme isolation and sensory deprivation meant to discourage his connections with other prisoners. López Rivera himself describes these torturous conditions as ubiquitous and argues that they are an explicit tactic of political suppression within and beyond prison walls:

"The U.S. government categorically denies it has political prisoners in its gulags. It does it primarily to cover up the nefarious, barbaric and even criminal acts and practices it carries out against us and other regular prisoners, and to do it with impunity... It does it to perpetuate the lie that it's the ultimate defender of freedom, justice, democracy and human rights in the world. And it uses it at times to further criminalize the political prisoners and/or our families and to disconnect us from our families, communities, supporters and the just and noble causes we served and try to continue serving."

López Rivera, the longest held Puerto Rican political prisoner in U.S. history, is now at the center of a massive international effort to secure his release. The reasons cited for his release are numerous, ranging from the claim that López Rivera received a disproportionately high sentence for his alleged crimes, to suggestions that in the twilight of his life López Rivera poses no serious threat to United States security, to less common position that armed struggle in the pursuit of independence is not a crime or act of terror. For these reasons, López Rivera's case has garnered the support of a range of Puerto Rican activists and allies both on the island and in the Diaspora, including high-profile political figures, celebrities, and journalists. This past summer saw an incredible ground swell of support for López Rivera's release with the newly revamped National Puerto Rican Day Parade in New York City dedicating the festivities to raising awareness about his case and calling for his release.

As many of López Rivera's supporters have noted, his case illustrates the deeply flawed nature of our criminal justice system and the ways in which Puerto Ricans, along with African Americans and other people of color, are disproportionately represented among the prison population. Further, people of color are overrepresented among individuals incarcerated for political reasons. Part of why support for Oscar López Rivera cuts across the political spectrum is precisely because he represents an extreme case of what many of us already know – there is no such thing as a fair day in court for Puerto Ricans accused of criminal acts or even criminal thoughts as we witnessed in the case of alleged enemy combatant José Padilla.<sup>1</sup> In this way, the continued work to free López Rivera must also interrogate the very logics and practices of a legal system and prison apparatus that keeps López Rivera and so many other Puerto Ricans locked up in cages. In other words, can we translate our support for Oscar López's freedom into a broad-based movement for prison abolition?

Prison abolition demands a radical reconfiguration of society and our relationships with one another. As activist scholar and former political prisoner Angela Davis notes, "Prison needs to be abolished as the dominant mode of addressing social problems that are better solved by other institutions and other means. The call for prison abolition urges us to imagine and strive for a very different social landscape."<sup>2</sup>

The prison industrial complex (PIC), or "the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems," functions to shore up uneven power relations that further disadvantage those who are already marginalized by the dominant structure.<sup>3</sup> Prisons, policing, surveillance, and other forms of punishment and deterrence, as is made clear in the case of López Rivera, do nothing to improve our lives or make society safer in a holistic sense. Instead, the PIC ravages already vulnerable communities while leaving intact systems of oppression that often determine what is criminal and who is a threat. We see this with the case of López Rivera, who, after witnessing the devastating effects of racism, colonialism, and poverty in Puerto Rican communities, was punished for advocating Puerto Rican independence by any means necessary. López Rivera remains locked up as many Puerto Ricans continue to feel the effects of racism, colonialism, and poverty on their everyday lives and in their communities.

The logic of the PIC is rooted in a racist and capitalist social order that sees people like López Rivera as impediments that need to be removed. That is one of the central functions of the PIC – to exile and incapacitate those agitating for a change to the repressive and hierarchical way in which society is structured.

As historian Dan Berger notes, "The prison can be seen as an extension of the repression that drove many of these people to undertake militant action in the first place. It is part of the government's arsenal to destroy revolutionaries."<sup>3</sup>

In some ways, Oscar López is a sympathetic figure – an aging militant who wants to be reunited with his family and see the ocean again – and as a result, it becomes difficult for us to extend our desire for his freedom to others currently languishing in jails and prisons. It is easy for many to argue that López Rivera "deserves" his freedom while others "deserve" to lose theirs. The notion that some people are undeserving of their liberty is precisely what fuels our current era of mass incarceration and its attendant myth that some people must live in captivity in order for the rest of us to feel truly free. These categories of deserving and undeserving are very much indebted to histories of enslavement, genocide, and imperialism, which reanimate hierarchies of difference in the present by marking some populations as not-quite-citizens whose freedom can be circumscribed.

López Rivera's incarceration for the crime of anti-colonial resistance makes particularly clear the ways in which imprisonment has always functioned to guarantee the freedom of some through the violent exclusion of those constructed as outside the bounds of normative citizenship. The work of prison abolition asks us to expand our thinking beyond categories of deserving and undeserving and instead acknowledge that prisons cause more harm than good and ultimately do not solve the social, economic, and political crises that create the conditions that push people to engage in criminalized activities in the first place. Ultimately, abolitionist thinking challenges us to recognize that if we want a more just world we must work towards dismantling institutions that quite literally cement inequality and create a terrain of uneven freedom.

As we continue to exert pressure on the United States government to free Oscar López Rivera we must also undertake the difficult work of reconsidering how we think about prisons and punishment within the Puerto Rican community. We must ask ourselves, particularly as people who have routinely been denied our right to self-determination, if we are comfortable allowing others to have their personal freedom denied or limited. What would it take for us to not just advocate for the freedom of Oscar López Rivera – to recognize and affirm his dignity, humanity, and right to exist within society – but to work towards the freedom of all our brothers and sisters locked in cages away from their family, friends, and communities? Oscar López's principled refusal to stop resisting from the inside should inspire those of us on the outside to fight in solidarity with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people to free all and not just some of us.

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*Marisol LeBrón, Ph.D. is a queer nuyorican scholar from the Bronx. She is an Assistant Professor of American Studies at Dickinson College. Her research explores issues of policing, violence, and race-making in Puerto Rican and Latina/o communities. Originally Published on La Repuesta Media 7 October 2014*



*Transgender Day of Rememberance will be held this year on November 20th. It is an annual event to memorialize victims killed by "anti-transgender" violence. Photo from the GSA Network.*

**WHAT YOU DO TO ME**

How do you live with yourself?  
 You make me feel difference, same me, important  
 My heart leaps when you walk in the room  
 I had many morning I search for reasons to be close  
 Not too close but close enough to see your smile  
 You make me feel like I did as a child  
 That love that was unconditional when we give of ourselves  
 When all we need is eye contact to say I love you.  
 Many times I am scared to fall but, with you  
 With you it's all I want and care to do  
 I haven't felt what you give me before  
 This unwanting love, you care for me just as I am  
 No restrictions, no rules, no hoops to jump through  
 My heart skips a beat when I hear the shuffle of your feet  
 How do you live with yourself?  
 Giving me your has made me a happy man  
 One who wants for nothing but you, All of you  
 Your thoughts, feelings, heart, and even insecurity  
 I need to please for I want you to want for nothing  
 As you have done for me  
 Be careful, I'm falling more, What do I do?  
 I can't help what you do for me.  
 It's not about the physical, although nice  
 It's about you, all of you  
 How do you live with your self?

Zachary, Idaho

**A TWISTED SOUL**

I live in these streets like a mass murderin' beast.  
 Creeping through alleys,  
 Lookin for a place to sleep.  
 My clothes are dirty torn into pieces,  
 My body odor smells worse than a decaying corpse.  
 My house is made out of a cardboard box,  
 In order to eat I got to go dig in trash cans.  
 I lost my home at the age of 15,  
 Lost my family at the age of 16,  
 But that's not it,  
 My whole world crumbled at the age of 21.  
 That's when they locked me up,  
 An threw away the keys by givin me life in prison  
 So writing gives me an avenue of escape,  
 Escaping deceit and pain.  
 I'm lost in this white man's concrete jungle,  
 Lost like a football fumble,  
 No fresh air, no clouds, no birds, no NOTHING....

Durrell, CA

**FORGIVE**

May I forgive myself for harming another, either intentionally or unintentionally.  
 May I forgive others who have harmed me, either intentionally or unintentionally.  
 May I forgive myself for harming myself, either intentionally or unintentionally.

No one is immune from being hurt, or from hurting others.

**Intention**

In the next minute, may I be open to each moment.  
 May my actions be kind, May they be beneficial, May they be of service.

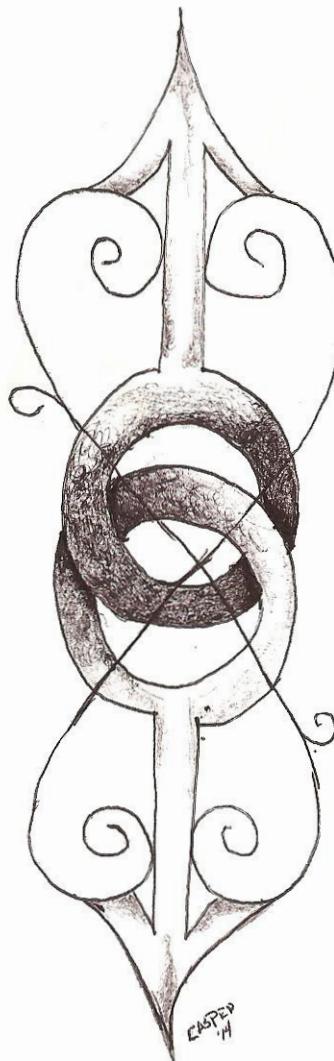
*I dedicate this poem to my daughter Kenisha Colmenero. And I'm waiting for her invitation to meet Face to Face. Can the Black & Pink team pray for my children that they are Healthy.*

Damaris, Massachusetts

**THE PERSON WITHIN**

As my heart struggles for what is right  
 My mind embraces demons bright  
 I feel the power of what is love  
 Alas I see a raven black dove  
 We know the feeling of love's embrace  
 You cannot hide hatred within white lace  
 While my soul weeps with disgrace  
 He shows contention upon his face  
 I know I was different when he began  
 My legacy fails me once again  
 To whom I speaketh is unknown  
 For it is my mind that he calls home

*Leanna, Federal System Girl*



Casper, Texas

I sit in a cell all to myself  
 thinking of all the good things I left  
 My father died when I was young...  
 My life being fun...  
 Being locked up so many years...  
 I think about what's really my fears  
 If only I had let go the beer...  
 I think about how a man put a gun to my head  
 I think about how he said go to your mom's bed  
 I think about how he beat me  
 If only he'd leave me alone, let me go free  
 Never did he think about his HIV  
 He never thought how this could affect my life  
 I was just a child I could not fight  
 Keeping everything balled up inside  
 No one seen me but at night I cried  
 Where is my family  
 Where is the love  
 Where is my mother when I needed a hug

*Lovie, Texas*

I have to live with myself, and so,  
 I want to be fit for myself to know;  
 I want to be able as days go by,  
 Always to look myself straight in the eye.  
 I don't want to stand with the setting sun,  
 And hate myself for the things I've done.  
 I don't want to keep on a closet shelf,  
 A lot of secrets about myself,  
 And fool myself as I come and go,  
 Into thinking that nobody else will know,  
 The kind of man I really am;  
 I don't want to dress myself up in sham.  
 I want to deserve all people's respect;  
 But here in this struggle for fame and pelf,  
 I want to be able to like myself.  
 I don't want to think as I come and go  
 That I'm bluster and bluff and empty show.  
 I never can hide myself from me,  
 I see what others may never see;  
 I know what others may never know,  
 I never can fool myself- and so,  
 Whatever happens, I want to be,  
 Self-respecting, and my conscience, free.

*Edgar*

**STRANGE FRUIT**

freshly picked from off life's vine,  
we call it strange fruit because we color outside of the lines.  
looks can be deceiving, you can't read a book from just lookin at its face,  
we tend to judge too much... & that's really not our place.  
time is of the essence but Johnny come too late,  
normal is over-rated...& some switch lanes to escape.  
we are who we are & can't be no more or less than that,  
there's more to people & life than what it seems...that's just a fact.  
tangerine peel, with apple seeds & a kiwi's exotic taste,  
don't know what to call it but it was created by god...so, it has a special place.  
man says its an abomination & claims its unholy to the most high,  
if we're all created in his image...then somebody's telling a lie!  
can't have it both ways...truth be told & written,  
society says we have to choose... to be dumb or gifted, slow or quick, or dog or a kitten.  
labels enable people to put things in their own little section,  
if we're all unique in design then we're all entitled to our own choice of expression.  
music is the soundtrack but variety is the spice,  
some enjoy caliente but to others...flamin is nice.  
we're entitled to be different in every single thing that we do,  
can't please everybody all the time...so...just be you.  
be weird, peculiar, queer or whatever floats your boat,  
whether you want it raining women or men...don't forget your raincoat.  
if you can't be yourself then how can your life be a reflection of the truth,  
be who you were meant to be in life & if they need to label us.....call us strange fruit.

Tiger

**ACCUSATIONS**

Why make this world so wonderful  
And allow us not to know  
I just wish to tell them, teach and watch them grow  
Many misunderstandings brought forth hatred  
of myself and of us all  
I still do not understand you . . . why then  
of all the angels that you allowed to fall  
Because of your mistakes, you have forsaken me  
for this our pain is nigh  
It's not my fault, my love for me, is not just in my eye  
I love you, though, mostly I loathe you  
When will you reveal to them what is really true  
How many more must die, in the name of your great  
love  
We're so tired of you allowing us to die by the iron  
fisted  
glove  
For all the beauty that you did create, nothing can  
compare  
How will this world ever accept us when we're kept  
held in  
despair  
They lie and teach that we are evil, they know full well  
our love is true  
Make them feel our pain, just once, each night as we do  
If they weren't so set each night, ready for our fall  
At least I know I might love them too each  
and all.  
Peace,  
Billy, Texas



Max, Ohio

**IF I COULD**

If I had the words to  
bring comfort and  
peace to your heart,  
I would speak them.

If I had the knowledge to  
know what course would bring  
your happiness,  
I would take it with you.

If I had the ability to take  
away all that troubles and pains you,  
I would do it.

If I had the means to show you  
all that is good within yourself,  
I would use it.

I don't have the power to change  
the world or to control the  
path on which you walk on.

But I have a strong and willing hand  
to hold your own, an ear willing to  
Listen, and a heart willing to  
Care forever.

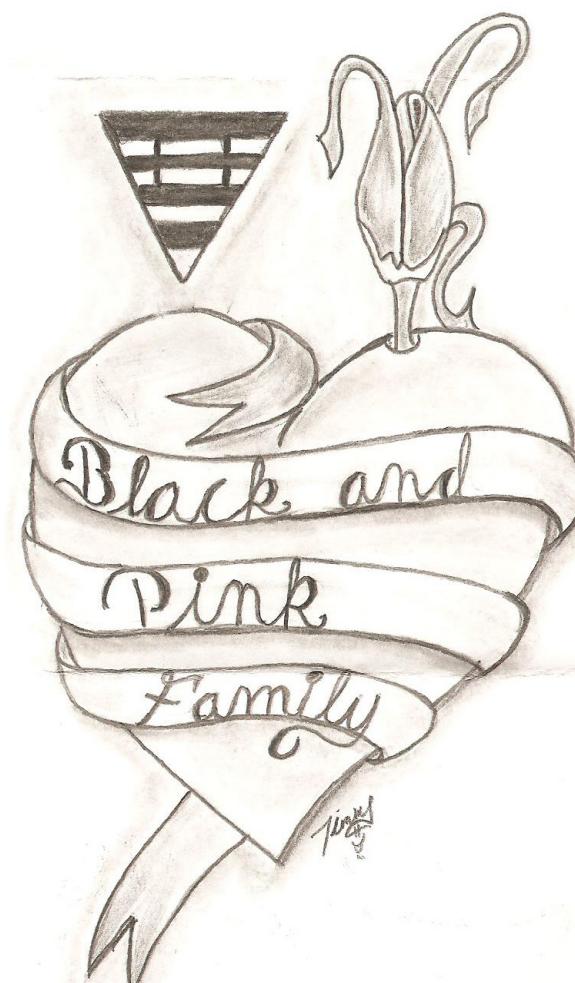
I will always be there  
For any LGBTQ Family member  
In need.

Ca\$per, Ohio

It's a reason why I love you and  
When we are apart I always find myself  
Smiling about the memories we've created.  
It's hard for me to focus on one thing when you  
all on my mind.  
I always see your face & hear your voice . . .  
I know without a shadow of a doubt  
Our souls will always be one.

It's a reason why I can't let you go.  
When the clouds seem to be dark  
And the rain seems to fall non-stop . . .  
You always find a way to bring sunshine into my  
life.  
Without you life don't have a meaning. But you  
give my world purpose.  
It's the reason why our love can never fall apart.  
Why all our moments spent together are  
cherished.  
Why our laughter echoes throughout the world . . .  
It's all because I love you Baby.

Happy Anniversary my sweets  
I love you.



Timmy, Kansas

For many, many, years—I was afraid to  
reveal my true self.  
For I was confused, ashamed, and deprived  
of knowing thyself.  
Then you came along & Introduced me to myself.  
“I must admit” It was then that, I fell in love  
with myself.  
Now, in self-supporting, self-sufficient,  
and secure of myself.  
Now I possess the “confidence,” the “strength”  
to express myself  
I hate you! I don’t understand you--  
Is what I used to tell myself.  
“I love you”! And accept you,  
Is what I now tell myself.

Puck, Pennsylvania

# TRANS LIVES MATTER

## #STOPTRANSMURDERS



[www.stoptransmurders.org](http://www.stoptransmurders.org)

Portraits of Bambi Salcedo and Monica Stevens by Micah Bazant.  
#StopTransMurders is in solidarity with 'Black Lives Matter,' an ongoing effort to end state and vigilante violence against Black people.

### JUSTICE FOR NATE

Nate survived a homophobic attack. He faced trial in September 2014 and was found guilty for defending his life. Nate Mancha defended himself against homophobic hate violence that is believed to be triggered by a rainbow sticker on the back of his car.

On March 1, 2014, 24-year-old Nate Mancha was driving his partner Carlton "Cruz" Mohn to work in Colorado Springs. To avoid being late, Nate cut off a driver to make a quick left turn. As Nate and Cruz pulled into the shopping center, they noticed that the car they cut off, a green 2002 Dodge Caravan, followed them. As Cruz got out of his car to go to work, the driver allegedly yelled out "faggot assholes" and drove away. After Nate dropped Cruz off, the same man, cornered Nate and used his van to block the exit to the Erindale shopping center parking lot.



*Image of Nate Mancha*

The man allegedly yelled a variety of slurs against Nate's sexual orientation, along with threats of violence. The same man then exited his vehicle and approached Nate's truck, crowbar in hand, and continued yelling and threatening Nate. He hit Nate's truck with the crowbar, visibly damaging the vehicle.

Nate Mancha feared for his life. He had no weapon to protect himself. He could see no individuals to approach for help. He had no weapon to protect himself. He did not have a cellphone to call for help. It is alleged that as Nate fled the scene, he hit the attacker with his truck. The attacker suffered injuries and was hospitalized as a result.

On October 6, the jury trial for Nate Mancha reached its conclusion. The jury came back with a guilty verdict for the 1st degree Felony Assault charge. The jury was unable to reach a verdict on the Attempted Murder charge, resulting in a mistrial for that charge alone. Today the El Paso county District Attorney's office announced that they would not pursue a new trial

for the Attempted Murder charge, which means the process moves to the sentencing phase for the guilty verdict. On December 2, 2014, Nate will have his sentencing hearing, where he faces a minimum of 10 years and a maximum sentence of 32 years.

*From Justice 4 Nate Support Campaign*

### HOW DOES THE PEN PAL PROGRAM WORK?

Pen pals come to our website after hearing about Black & Pink from a friend or at an event like Gay Pride. When you send us a letter or a completed pen pal form, we list that information online. This means that anyone with an internet connection (who knows about B&P) can go to the B&P website and look up your name and see that information (including your sexual orientation and gender if you've given us that information). The "free world" pen pal picks one or more people from the database and sends us the name(s) and B&P number(s). B&P automatically sends them that person's name and address. If someone asks us for 5 or more addresses we contact them before providing information, to make sure they have good intentions and are not DOCs or anyone else who just wants to harass people.

"Free world" pen pals see your name and preferred name, state, bio, types of pen pals you're looking for, first letter, age, gender/sex, pronoun, sexuality, race/ethnicity, release expected or not, release date and profile picture. They do not see your HIV status.

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"Free world" pen pals see your name and preferred name, state, bio, types of pen pals you're looking for, first letter, age, gender/sex, pronoun, sexuality, race/ethnicity, release expected or not, release date and profile picture. They do not see your HIV status.

A sample of what your profile looks like on the Black & Pink website is on the last page (Dawn is not a real person):

### WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD BIO:

The prisoners in our family who have several pen pals and get pen pals the quickest write bios that are requesting friendship. Most people on the outside who are writing are not interested in having a pen pal relationship. If you're looking for something that's sexual or romantic it's unlikely that we'll be able to find you someone. If you're open to either a friendship or a relationship you'll be much more likely to have someone write to you, if you write your bio primarily seeking friendship.'

Here are a few things that prisoners who have several pen pals do in their bios:

- The biggest difference between prisoners who do and don't have pen pals is whether the bio makes it seem like you're looking for romance or friendship. If you write looking for friendship you are much more likely to have a pen pal friend.
- The overall vibe of the bio is positive. For example, many say "looking forward to having someone to write to" and are about what the writer enjoys. It is also totally fine to say that you're lonely, cut off from family, miserable in solitary, etc. The trick is having more positive things to say than negative ones.
- List interests and positive personality adjectives.
- Some questions to think about when writing your bio:
- What things did you like doing before you were incarcerated?
- What do you think are your best personality characteristics?
- What are you hoping for in your pen pal friendship?
- Do you have particular kinds of books you like to read? Favorite TV shows or movies?

To the left is an example of how a penpal profile looks when someone visits our website online.

## ADDRESSES: PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESSES FOR MAIL!

Please Note: You can send multiple requests/topics in one envelope! Due to concerns about consent and confidentiality, you cannot sign up other people for the newspaper. However, we can accept requests from multiple people in the same envelope. There's no need to send separate requests in more than one envelope. If you are being released and would still like to receive a copy of the newspaper, please let us know the address we can send the newspaper to!

	<b>Black &amp; Pink -</b> <b>614 Columbia Rd</b> <b>Dorchester, MA 02125</b>
If you would like to request:	Please write one or more of these topics in the top line of the address:
Newspaper Subscriptions, Pen-Pal Program, Address Change, Request Erotica, Religious Support & Volunteering (Send thank you cards to donors, etc.)	<b>Black &amp; Pink - General</b>
Newspaper Submissions- Stories, Articles, Poems & Art	<b>Black &amp; Pink - Newspaper Submissions</b>
Black & Pink Organization Feedback	<b>Black &amp; Pink - Feedback</b>
Advocacy Requests- Include details about situation and thoughts about how calls or letters might help	<b>Black &amp; Pink - Advocacy</b>
Submit to Erotica Zine	<b>Black &amp; Pink - HOT PINK</b>
Stop Your Newspaper Subscription	<b>Black &amp; Pink - STOP Subscription</b>

**Pen Pal Program:** LGBTQ prisoners can list their information and short non-sexual ad on the internet where free world people can see it and decide to write. There will be a Pen-Pal Request Form in the Newspaper every 4 months.

<b>Rip out this form &amp; Mail to: Black and Pink-Form   614 Columbia Ave   Dorchester, MA 02125</b> If you have not done so in the past 6 months (to reduce mail so we can respond faster), please send this form back. <b>You can include a picture and "first letter" introduction</b> for us to scan, if you wish! I give Black and Pink permission to share this info on the Internet on my behalf. I understand anyone who uses the Internet can find the *starred information. Signature: _____ Date: _____		ID # _____ *Pronoun she   he   they   ze   other: _____ ↑ What words do you prefer people use when talking about you?  Is this an update of previous information? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No																																			
Please check the kinds of correspondence you are interested in: <input type="checkbox"/> Having a friendship <input type="checkbox"/> Writing about social justice or activism <input type="checkbox"/> Having a romance <input type="checkbox"/> Writing sexy or erotic letters <input type="checkbox"/> No newspaper (it doesn't have an envelope and is not discrete) <input type="checkbox"/> Resources (Please describe at bottom of page. Limited availability.) <input type="checkbox"/> No holiday cards																																					
*Do you need to write to someone who will be discrete in letters / not out you? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Do you have a reading disability like dyslexia? *Do you need someone to write printed letters to you? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Do you want the newspaper in Spanish? [Desea que el periódico en español?] <input type="checkbox"/> Si <input type="checkbox"/> Sí, y inglés <input type="checkbox"/> No																																					
Please provide this optional information, if you would like: <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Your *age and birth date</td> <td>Are you allowed to write people under 18? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>*Your race / ethnicity</td> <td>Are you allowed to write to ALL other prisoners? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>*Your gender</td> <td>Any other restrictions? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">           *What attributes, interests, or qualities would you like the person who will write to you to have? (Read "Tell us..." first)         </td> </tr> <tr> <td>*Your sexuality</td> <td colspan="2"> <input type="checkbox"/> I'm trans (The sex I grew up as is different than how I feel)         </td> </tr> <tr> <td>*Your faith (if any)</td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non-English language</td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>* Release expected? Date?</td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>HIV status</td> <td colspan="2"> <input type="checkbox"/> Neg <input type="checkbox"/> Pos <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown         </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Are you in solitary? Until when?</td> <td colspan="2">           Can you write to people using CORRLINKS? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No            How many people outside your family write you?         </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">           *Tell us about yourself (your background, hobbies, interests, beliefs, talents, etc.) and who you are hoping to talk to. About 25 words.            Outside members have told us they are more likely to write to people who provide information here, so please write at least one sentence about yourself!            Outside members respond most often to people whose profiles use positive words to describe themselves → say that they are looking for <b>friendship</b> versus <b>romance</b> → say who they are interested in writing, or if they are open to writing anyone. → re-read to make sure what you say is clear. → Some people are more likely to write if you share your conviction--this ABSOLUTELY OPTIONAL. B&amp;P supports everyone who is in lock-up regardless of conviction.         </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">           Do we have permission to display (the best) picture of you from a corrections website? <input type="checkbox"/> *Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (Only available in some states)            If we can send, would you like these resources: <input type="checkbox"/> Erotica publication <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Coming out <input type="checkbox"/> Trans <input type="checkbox"/> Resource list            Please describe the type of resources you want         </td> </tr> </table>				Your *age and birth date	Are you allowed to write people under 18? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	*Your race / ethnicity	Are you allowed to write to ALL other prisoners? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	*Your gender	Any other restrictions? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	*What attributes, interests, or qualities would you like the person who will write to you to have? (Read "Tell us..." first)		*Your sexuality	<input type="checkbox"/> I'm trans (The sex I grew up as is different than how I feel)		*Your faith (if any)			Non-English language			* Release expected? Date?			HIV status	<input type="checkbox"/> Neg <input type="checkbox"/> Pos <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		Are you in solitary? Until when?	Can you write to people using CORRLINKS? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No How many people outside your family write you?		*Tell us about yourself (your background, hobbies, interests, beliefs, talents, etc.) and who you are hoping to talk to. About 25 words. Outside members have told us they are more likely to write to people who provide information here, so please write at least one sentence about yourself! Outside members respond most often to people whose profiles use positive words to describe themselves → say that they are looking for <b>friendship</b> versus <b>romance</b> → say who they are interested in writing, or if they are open to writing anyone. → re-read to make sure what you say is clear. → Some people are more likely to write if you share your conviction--this ABSOLUTELY OPTIONAL. B&P supports everyone who is in lock-up regardless of conviction.				Do we have permission to display (the best) picture of you from a corrections website? <input type="checkbox"/> *Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (Only available in some states) If we can send, would you like these resources: <input type="checkbox"/> Erotica publication <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Coming out <input type="checkbox"/> Trans <input type="checkbox"/> Resource list Please describe the type of resources you want			
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PLEASE NOTE: We cannot respond to letters asking if we got your message. It takes up to six months for our volunteers to enter a letter into our system. You will know that your first letter has been processed when you start receiving the newspaper. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee you will get a pen pal, and we do not send out pen pal lists. Some prisons block our newspaper. Please spread the word!